

BEST SHOW

MAGAZINE

FIRST
&
FINAL
ISSUE





My name is TOM SCHARPLING and I WELCOME YOU TO THE FIRST AND LAST ISSUE OF THE BEST SHOW MAGAZINE!!!!

When I announced that we would be doing a magazine as the centerpiece to the 2012 WFMU fundraising marathon premium, I thought it would come together easier than the projects that had consumed previous years. A magazine would be easier than a DVD or a vinyl single featuring a variety of super-busy artists covering cleaned up versions of GG Allin songs, right?

WRONG. This magazine has been REALLY HARD to put together. What was I thinking?

To be completely honest, what I was thinking was that I could recapture a bit of the magic that was fanzine culture back when I was a young lad in the early 1990s. Fanzines were the musical and cultural lifeline for so many people back then – they were the gatekeepers and the critics, telling their readership what to check out and what to avoid. And one fanzine stood above the pack—CONFLICT written by Gerard Cosloy, who was also running Homestead Records at the time and would go on to co-found Matador Records. He combined music and comedy – the two things that have defined my life! – in a way that spoke directly to me. His fanzine inspired me to launch my own, the ‘legendary’ EIGHTEEN WHEELER, which ran for an unimpressive four issues before I pulled the plug due to a collective shrug from the world and my puzzling need to focus on Getting A Paying Job.

But that experience set me on a path that I’m still on today—The Best Show On WFMU is in a lot of ways an extension of what that fanzine tried to capture. And this magazine could be seen as one last chance to go back to the good old days of fanzine culture, but this time the magazine is an extension of the radio show—like Sting said “the student is now the master!” Sting said that, right? It was either him or Bobby Slayton. WHAT DID I TELL YOU—MUSIC AND COMEDY JOINED TOGETHER LIKE BROTHERS IN ARMS!

WHICH WAS A DIRE STRAITS ALBUM!

ANOTHER MUSIC REFERENCE!

I would like to send an extra large THANK YOU to Maggie Serota and Chris Spooner for their insane dedication to making this magazine a reality – they have worked on it on a near-daily basis for the last year and they certainly made it go from good to great.

And mucho thanks to Daniel Ralston, Paul Bruno, all of the writers and artists who contributed their words and pictures to the magazine, and Kurt Vile and Greg Cartwright giving us original songs for the flexi disc. And an eternal and universal thank you to everybody who pledged to keep WFMU on the air for another year. None of this happens without you dudes. Well, it might still happen but it would probably look and sound pretty crummy.

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IT'S GARY THE SQUIRREL!!!!

By Gary the Squirrel

Hey everybody it's your #pal Gary the Squirrel!!! What's going on?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

I hope everybody reading this is having a great 2013! I know I am—some of the highlights so far? I went to the local bagel place in Highland Park NJ (where me and Vance and our other roommate [who doesn't want to be talked about!!! What a weirdo—being involved in the show has been so good for me and Vance! The other day a woman behind the counter at the bagel place recognized me from the radio show and gave me extra tofu cream cheese on my poppy seed bagel because she thought I was #hilarious!]) and the woman behind the counter recognized me from...wait, I told that story in the #parenthesis! Come on, get it together, Gary!!!!!!!!!!!!

Other highlights of 2013 so far have been getting the Blu-Ray boxed set of STANLEY KUBRICK MOVIES!!!!!!!!!! They look so nice and will help me on my quest to become the best #artist I can be—whether it is standup or writing or hosting my award winning podcast COMEDIANS ARE NUTS, my goal is to do the best #work I can do. Artists need to sample the #best if you want to be the best!!

And do I worry about the haters? To tell you the truth I do. I am but flesh and blood and fur—don't like people saying that I #suck but I figure that if I'm gonna dish it out I've gotta learn to take it better. And I am! The other day one of my peers wrote on Twitter that "Gary the Squirrel sucks." I couldn't believe it. All I ever did to them was write that everything that person made totally sucked! Where do they get off judging a fellow artist like that?!?!?

I should also say that as I am co-founder and associate editor of this magazine, I will be weighing in and giving my opinions of the articles and pieces throughout the issue with something I call "Gary Sez"! But trust me...I take my job as associate editor VERY SERIOUSLY and I won't pull punches! If I don't like something I will say so!!! That's the kind of associate editor/publisher that I am!!!!

And remember—follow me on Twitter at @GaryThaSquirrel!!!!!!

MUSINGS FROM THE Mind of AP Mike

by Mike Lisk

...Woke up screaming with leg cramps last night. My neighbors must think I'm a wild man in the sack. Hee hee hee. Just ate some nachos that didn't agree with me. So proud of myself for not throwing up, which happens with alarming frequency these days. You know that guy who talks really loud and calls everyone "motherfucker" and "cocksucker" and people think he's hilarious? Someone is going to kill him one day.



Joseph Frontirre

.I've got to admit, I make a mean sloppy joes.. Went to the Salvador Dali Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida and couldn't stop laughing at the painting of the skull humping a piano. .Exercised great restraint in not accusing my drinking buddy of farting yesterday, because he's a senior citizen. .Sometimes, even I have to admit, everything seems futile. .Inspired by Django Unchained, I'm thinking of starting a Mandingo fighting league for the local kids.

.If they ever ask me to write a blurb for the cover of the Bible, here's what I'd write: "If you must read one book in the Bible, read The Book of Job." Speaking of the Bible, the more I read it, the more I get the sense that God has a plan for me and it includes crushing me out of existence. .I'm still trying to get to the bottom of the whole munchkin suicide thing in The Wizard of Oz. I'm not quite convinced it's a bird. .I try to use the expression "quid pro quo" at least once a day so that people will think I'm smart. It mostly goes sailing over the heads of the cashiers I spring it on. .Life would be so much more enjoyable without all the back and forth. And think of the savings on gas. When it's all said and done, I have to say, I wouldn't have done it all over again. Ultimately, what I crave is complete silence. Now if only everyone would shut the fuck up. Till next time, keep keeping it real!



"I wish it was a million more pages long!!"



“The Deep Dark Woods have earned their beards.”



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tomorrow.

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to go and it, it may sound funny,
but it's true. Ooh-ooh-uh-oooh.

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How To Make A Best Show Call

by Maggie Serota

There's no magic formula to making a successful Best Show call. Sometimes the most well-intentioned calls can go south on a lark. Conversely, sometimes the most perversely compelling exchanges can be gleaned out of what might be otherwise seen as an unmitigated parade of wisenheimers.

Although what can make for compelling listening is hard to nail down, after years of listening to the entire spectrum of calls, there are a few general guidelines upon which we can all agree:

— Don't ask Tom to name your cat or your kid unless you are actually prepared to commit to a name like Party Town. Seriously, are you really going to wait on hold for up to an hour just to waste your time and ours when we all know damn well that you will end up settling on a generic name like Midnight, Precious, Tinkles or Robert Jr.?

— Keep it light and fun. The airwaves are not your mouth's litterbox. This is not the time to bring up any or all of the following:

1. Jonestown
2. Seriously, though, is there a God? Is this God a benevolent God? If so why does this God allow war, famine, the cancellation of Enlightened, etc.
3. A spontaneous memory of a personal trauma that is best discussed with your immediate family members or a trained mental health professional
4. That irregularity on your X-Ray that could just be nothing, but the doc just wants to be sure, so he's ordering a round of tests. Once again, this is immediate family territory
5. Anything you don't want repeated to a jury

6. That news story about that sex offender, child murderer or school shooting. Basically, avoiding any topic with a body count is probably a good rule of thumb.

7. How you tried to use some Best Show quote or reference to score with chicks. Yes, I said chicks. No female would ever call the show to brag about how mangling one of Tom's quotes helped her get a date. This is only a clueless dude thing.

8. Whatever gross porn thing that's popular among degenerates on the Internet. Seriously, use some common sense here. No girls. No cups. Soft G.

9. Here's a good litmus test: Has Anderson Cooper ever openly wept on national television about whatever you're planning on talking about? Yes, he has? Maybe don't call in about it.

10. Here's a great litmus test: Did the word you'd like to use get dubbed out of the TV-version of your favorite movie? Then don't say it on the call.

— Oh, so you've decided to workshop your hilariously innovative funny voice, character or bit. Wonderful. As you know, Lorne Michaels tunes into the show every Tuesday night and he's just waiting to pluck some promising comic upstart out of his mundane existence and drop him into a world of critical adoration, overnight fame, popular catchphrases and all the craft services you can eat. That 50 minutes you'll spend waiting on the phone is a small price to pay for when that nasally old man impression hits the airwaves and instantly reinvents comedy. You definitely won't crack under all the anticipation and Tom definitely won't heave-ho you after your first nervous giggle. Nothing can go wrong.

— If Tom finds some flimsy comparison to Fonzie or Happy Days, just go with it. Tom is in the driver seat and all you can do is pray that he won't kick you out while the car is in motion, mafia style.

— This is not your show. You talk to Tom and Tom talks to the audience. When Tom talks, you do not talk. That sounds simple and obvious in theory, but, well, you've heard some of these callers.

— Tom sings. You do not sing. You definitely **DO NOT SING ALONG WITH TOM**. Unless Tom specifically asks you to sing. Even then, maybe don't sing. It's a rookie mistake upon which even the most likable callers have died a thousand deaths.

— Hey, you've been talking for awhile with no response? There's no dial tone, so Tom didn't hang up on you...Oh, no, you've been Bad Gompnied! Or maybe you're just getting an abrupt, heave-ho. Either way, when things are going south, just gracefully fall on your sword and hope for better luck next time. It's the honorable thing to do.



Adam Fellows



*"Just perfect!
Two paws up!!!"*

1 DO and 5 DON'Ts for a **SUCCESSFUL** CALL to the **BEST SHOW!**

by one-time "Quality caller" John Hogan.
Success Not at all guaranteed,
but it's something to keep in mind...

DO ASK
TOM TO
NAME YOUR
PET. HE
WILL
HAVE THE
RIGHT
NAME.



DON'T BE A TOILET MOUTH.



DON'T BE AN EGGHEAD.



DON'T EAT.



DON'T DRINK!



DON'T EXPECT TOM TO
HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS!

As a long time WFMU listener, it pleases me to share the following pencil-sharpening technique with you. This technique has never before been published, and it behooves the reader to keep its secrets close. Please swallow this magazine after reading.

NOVELTY PENCIL SHARPENING TECHNIQUE: “THE HAND OF MYSTERY”

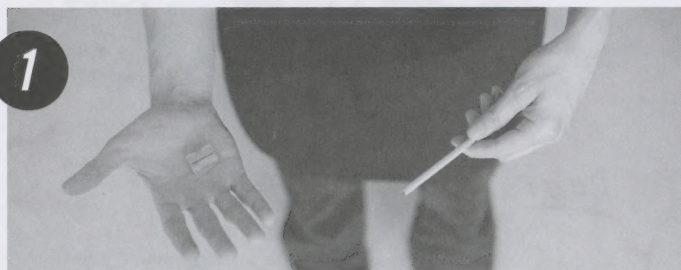
by David Rees

Some of us believe every instance of sharpening a pencil involves a bit of magic, but the excitement of the unexplainable becomes even more palpable with this simple technique.

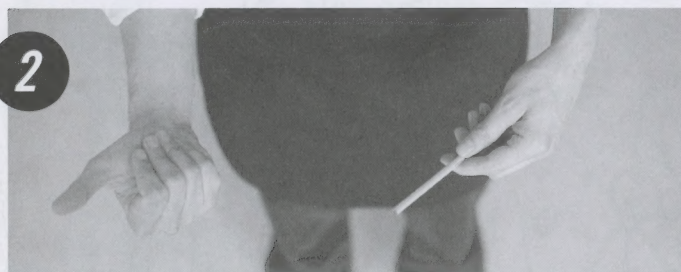
If you've ever seen a magician sharpen a pencil in his or her “magical hand,” you've probably wondered how it was done. Here's the secret: The magician's palm is holding a pencil sharpener, which is obscured by the closed fingers making a fist around it. The hand is “magical” because you can't see through it.

To understand the principle behind this obfuscatory strategy, take a small object and place it in your palm. Now close your fingers around it, making a fist. Notice that you can no longer see the object resting in your own hand, yet it is still there, as you can quickly confirm by opening your fingers again.

It's easy to delight your friends by exploiting this opacity of flesh in your own practice. First, place a pencil sharpener in the palm of your hand, making sure its cutting hole is facing “out” -- that is, the hole will be accessible within your curled index finger as it tucks into your thumb, or within your pinkie finger as it presses into your palm. (The choice is up to you; for this demonstration I have chosen the latter.)



Close your hand around the sharpener.



Now wait a few minutes before returning to the gathering from which you hid while concealing the sharpener. Taking care to keep your hand closed, say something casual like, “Would anyone like to see my hand of mystery?” or “Shall I sharpen a pencil using my magical fist?” or “Sorry I had to step out for a minute; my doctor called with some bad news: The test results just came back and it turns out I have a diseased hand that is so overrun with acid-leaking wounds, I can actually sharpen a pencil just by grabbing it, who'd care to watch?”

Push the pencil into your fist, making sure it enters the hidden sharpener. (If you miss the opening of the pencil sharpener, your goose is cooked, as no amount of rotating the pencil shaft will sharpen it against the soft flesh of your palm.)



Sharpen as usual. You may need to loosen your fist in order to give the shavings room to exit the sharpener -- a coughing fit or outburst of foaming glossolalia should distract your audience enough to widen your fist a little.



Playing close attention to the resistance of the pencil point inside the sharpener inside your hand, continue sharpening until it feels ready to share with the onlookers. Don't open your hand, lest the audience see the pencil sharpener resting within it. Instead, carefully slide the pencil out of your closed fist, while proclaiming, “Another victory for the hand of mystery,” or “Wow, I guess my doctor was right! I really do have a horrible hand disease with many dangerous wounds!”



If the demonstration leaves your audience feeling unsettled or upset, calm their nerves by opening your fist and revealing the pencil sharpener and shavings hidden therein. “Everything's okay,” you can reassure them, “it's just a pencil sharpener I hid in my hand while I was in the bathroom at your party.”

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VANCE THE PUPPET

INTERVIEWS
Emerson Lake And Palmer Expert

GARRY FREEMAN

The act of undertaking a task as unwieldy and varied as encapsulating the live body of work for a band like Emerson Lake and Palmer seems like a fool's errand at best, but author Garry Freeman seems to have done the impossible with his amazing book *DO YOU WANNA PLAY SOME MAGIC? EMERSON LAKE AND PALMER IN CONCERT 1970-1979* (Soundcheck Books). Freeman delves deep into the live body of work compiled by the band that many—not myself, unless I slip up, which has happened on occasion—refer to as “ELP.” The book features set lists, tour dates and an elaborate cataloguing of the equipment the band used to bring its vision to life night after night.

I was lucky enough to interview Mr. Freeman via email about his amazing book and his thoughts on Emerson Lake and Palmer. He seems like a jovial man and I recommend his book to fans of ELP.

V: HOW WOULD YOU ENTICE A NEWCOMER TO THE MUSIC OF ELP? WHERE IN THE CATALOG SHOULD THEY START?

GF: There is something for everyone, for all tastes on ELP's music: hard driving rock, free-form jazz, romantic ballads, theme-based epics, orchestral works, the lot. Start at the beginning but if they wanted to choose one album, it would be TRILOGY. There's everything on that album!

V: THE BOOK IS SO IMMACULATELY RESEARCHED. WHAT WERE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES IN WRITING IT?

GF: Trying to give a new slant, a new impression of the same pieces of music on successive nights and tours. The other main challenge was to make sure that I showed, throughout the book, how pieces of music and songs were developed 'live' on stage, often before they were recorded in the studio.

V: AT WHAT POINTS DO YOU FEEL ELP MADE THEIR BIGGEST PROGRESSIONS ARTISTICALLY? AND WHAT (IF ANY) WOULD YOU CONSIDER TO BE THEIR BIGGEST MISSTEP?

GF: It's for to be, for me, with BRAIN SALAD SURGERY and especially “Karn Evil 9”

The biggest mis-step was, I suppose, the IN THE HOT SEAT album. Listened to it once and never again. LOVE BEACH has even slated but there's some very good music on there!

V: IF YOU HAD TO PICK ONE KEITH SOLO FROM ALL THE TAPES YOU HEARD TO EXPLAIN HIS GENIUS, WHICH WOULD IT BE?

GF: To be honest, it's impossible to select one solo from all the thousands he has done.

However - I would say almost any of the long Moog/Hammond solos he did in “Aquatarkus” every night. Superb solos, always different every single night, playing well-known tunes in amongst them (the “Peer Gynt Suite,” “Theme from Star Wars”) or doing a call-and-response section with Greg.

Same with the long piano solos in “Take a Pebble”; some nights he threw in any musical idea that came into his head and it always worked!

ONCE AGAIN, I THANK MR. FREEMAN FOR HIS TIME AND RECOMMEND EVERYBODY BUY HIS BOOK!



“This is probably my favorite thing in the whole magazine!!!”

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Over the last year I have sent numerous e-mails to Tom Scharpling and he hasn't returned ONE of them. I can't figure out why and I'm starting to get a little insulted. I thought maybe I had the wrong e-mail address, but I checked around and it's correct.

I understand that people get busy, but this is ridiculous. It's sad when someone becomes a "big shot" and forgets about his real friends. I've allowed all of my emails to be published in this magazine. Maybe Tom will finally see them and get around to writing me back.



skype

Calling



03:45 Tom Scharpling

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: Zappa catalog on iTunes!

Hey Tom, How are you? Did you see they released the entire Frank Zappa catalogue on iTunes today? Of course the version of "Cruising with Ruben & the Jets" they put out is the 1984 remix with those terrible sounding overdubs. I don't understand why The Zappa Family Trust doesn't make available both versions!!! Anyway, I know you're a big fan of "weird" music, so I thought you might want to check out what's been sitting in "Joe's Garage." (LOL!!)

Your friend,
-Jake

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: Staten Island Garbage Rats

Hey Bossman! Heard the show the other night. Still think it's too long and you should play more tunes, but I loved your idea for the TV show, "Staten Island Garbage Rats." I would TOTALLY watch that!

It's actually PERFECT, because I have a friend who owns a junkyard on Staten Island! I gave him a call and he's willing to make his junkyard available to you for a location scout! He's around anytime this week between 6:00am and 6:45am every day. All you need to do is pay him a location scout fee of \$1,000 and you can check out his dump for 45 minutes. He may want you to sign an agreement if you end up using it for the show, but you guys can discuss that. I gave him your home phone number.

You're welcome!!
-Jake

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: Favor

Could I borrow \$300?

-Jake

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: Ted Leo

Tommy! Do you have Ted Leo's e-mail? I have a song idea for him.

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: Urgent!

Hey Tom! Great show tonight! Have you ever thought about doing more of a Dr. Demento thing? Maybe countdown the 5 funniest song parodies

of the week? There's lots of great stuff on YouTube. Also, what's Julie Klausner's deal?

-Jake

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: <no subject>

Can I borrow \$900? My PayPal is the same as my e-mail address.

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: Low Times

Hey Tommy Gunn! I just checked out the Low Times podcast for the first time! Maggie and Daniel are awesome! You come off a bit like a know-it-all professor, but I guess that's kind of your "schtick." LOL!!!

Anyway, I didn't know any of the bands you guys were talking about, but I really hope you guys do a Captain Beefheart episode.

Talk soon!
-JF

P.S. Could I borrow \$250?

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: 1st Annual Los Angeles Podcast Awards!

Tom! Great news!!! I've been tapped to host the "1st Annual Los Angeles Podcast Awards!" It's a grand awards show honoring the best and brightest of the Los Angeles based podcast community. It's going to be live streamed via CollegeHumor.com and the show is sponsored by Audible.com!

I was wondering if maybe you'd like to write some jokes for my opening monologue? There's no pay, but I can get you a couple free audiobook downloads from Audible and a credit in the comments section on the website.

If you could submit two pages of jokes by Thursday, that would ROCK. Can't promise I'll use any of them, but would love to see what you come up with!

Keep on rockin' my friend!

Jake Fogelnest
Host of the 1st Annual Los Angeles Podcast Awards

To: Tom Scharpling <chumpsmasher@yahoo.com>
From: Jake Fogelnest <redacted for privacy concerns>

Subject: Gary

Is Gary the Squirrel real?



"This is probably my favorite thing in the whole magazine!!!"



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PAPA NEZ SPEAKS

by Tom Scharpling

I emailed Michael Nesmith back in late 2011 on the outside chance that he would let me interview him for the Low Times podcast when I was in Los Angeles the following January. I didn't have high hopes for receiving a reply, let alone getting a chance to having a conversation with one of my all-time heroes. But I figured I'd at least try, so I put together an introductory note explaining who I am and mentioning some of the accomplishments I have racked up over the last few years—my past as a writer on MONK and my having been ranked the third best music video director of 2011 by ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY—realizing that the guy probably gets an endless stream of fans begging for interviews.

I could've been bowled over by a soft breeze when I got an email from Nesmith a few days later "Dear Mr. Cranky, Braggy, third best EW comedy writer for Monk—or Tom" it began. Nesmith was giving me the business! What followed was a thoughtful response saying he would do the interview if I could make it to his home base of Monterey, California.

A few weeks later, I got up at the crack of dawn and made the trek from L.A. to Monterey. Six hours later, I pulled up to the address of his office, grabbed my bag filled with recording equipment and nervously opened the door. I had hoped for a few minutes in a reception area to gather myself before entering Nesmith's office, but as soon as I opened the door Nesmith was sitting at a drafting table facing the entrance. "You must be Tom" he said looking up. I promptly lost my shit and tried to gather myself as his assistant positioned me on a nearby couch.

After talking with Nesmith for over an hour I came away realizing he's one of the smartest people I've ever met. His mind seems to be in constant motion, always thinking about what the future might hold. Unfortunately, the other thing I came away learning was that I am a horrible audio engineer—when I checked the recording in a fast food parking lot a few minutes after wrapping up, I learned I had pressed the wrong button and the conversation wasn't at broadcast quality. So we decided to include it in this magazine, which is a blessing in disguise.

Let it be noted that this conversation took place before the passing of Davy Jones in February 2012 and that Nesmith—as many will attest to—is a person whose relationship with being a Monkee is a fluid thing. Sometimes he is okay with the legacy and other times the mention of his former band makes him noticeably uncomfortable.

At the time of this interview I would've thought the notion of him joining the band for a tour would be the last thing he'd do. But that's exactly what he did at the end of the year, joining Micky Dolenz and Peter Tork for what might be the final curtain call of one of my favorite bands ever. I was lucky enough to start last year talking to Michael Nesmith and to end it watching him play his songs onstage. And I look forward to whatever else Nez—he said I could call him Nez!—does next.

Thanks to Ken Plume and Jessica Kent for making this happen and to Ryan Sartor for transcribing this.

TS: *You started playing guitar, I guess, relatively late. You weren't the kid who was six, strumming a guitar, obsessed with it.*

MN: No, no. I actually wasn't interested in playing. I was more interested in writing and performing and that kind of thing. And so, I went to a show and I saw Hoyt Axton play. He was a folk singer. Gosh, I don't know where he was from.

I think he was Californian, but he may have been out of Oklahoma or something. I never knew him well. I never knew him at all. I went into a club, and I saw him and after that, "That'll be a good way to go."

So I was nineteen and in the Air Force and I went back to my C.O. in the Air Force and I said, "I need to go home now. I'm not going to make it in the Air Force."

And he said, "Why, sure." And I went home and I got a guitar and that's when I started playing, so I didn't start playing until I was twenty.

TS: *Do you remember a first song that you were just like, "Wow, I can do this."*

MN: No. He sang "Greenback Dollar." And that was a good bar, rowdy, kind of scream 'em up song. But that was in the era of pressed-pants folk singers.

The material was the sort of re-purposed, re-formatted old railroad songs, you know. Death and destruction, spruced up and elegant.

TS: *Yeah, yeah. So like, Kingston Trio, stuff like that?*

MN: Yeah, yeah. So I couldn't sing any of that stuff, but mostly because I couldn't read music. So what I did was I'd just start writing. I just wrote and I started writing songs.

TS: *And is there a first song, though, where you were just like, "I like writing songs?" Or "I have an aptitude for this?"*

MN: Well, what I didn't know at the time was that anybody else would sing or be even slightly interested in the songs. But what I felt real comfortable with was just singing. And that was good, but I... I wrote a song that was. I don't know if it was a protest song or something because that was a. Dylan was a huge influence at that particular time. This was '61, '62.

Kennedy was still alive and his point of view, the whole Dylan/Baez nexus of the Greenwich Village crowd, folk music, Woody Guthrie sort of was of some mild interest to me and I would try to write in that particular style.

One of the first songs I wrote was sort of along that line. But it didn't satisfy because my roots music was a mixture of hard Texas Blues, Black Blues and Country Blues—Hank Williams and Cafeteria Organ Music. Those were the three converging elements of music. Any place I heard music, it was just electrifying.

TS: *And you were absorbing everything at that point?*

MN: I guess I was because it comes back to haunt me.

TS: *So you had the foundation of the '50s—the rock 'n roll and the country and the kind of border stuff. Now the Beatles gets injected into the mix.*

MN: Before that there was this trickle down big band music. That was my mother and her mother's era, you know, '30s and '40s. I had a big dose of that. Which is where I kind of got taken with Fred and Ginger and that dynamic. And I really loved that music.

And they had a bunch of 78s and I listened to them over and over again. The music of my dating and my youth and my romance and the whole post-pubescent kind of thing was hard '50s Southern Blues and Rock 'N Roll.

And then it sank into the high school and I was no good in high school, just indifferent and bad at it, so I quit that. And I joined the Air Force and I was indifferent and bad at that. And then I saw Hoyt and I thought, "Well, maybe this is what I could do." We're still pre-'64 and we're still pre-'63.

A big kind of rearrangement of my life, which was the Kennedy/Nixon debates. But I'm not political at all. Even still, I'm sort of apolitical. But there was something in the power of television...that made me think about the way we present ideas, the way we get things across.

And I was inspired by art and literature and poetry and songs and everything, but the new medium of television had such a dense superstructure. There was something going on with it that I had never seen before and that really started to burn into me.

So, the folk music was good. Just a few months, well two weeks or three weeks after I got my guitar, and couldn't play at all, I played a concert with what I could play, which was to a nurses' dinner, a dinner for graduating nurses. And I just sang the six songs that I'd just written. And I was surprised at their approval of that. "Oh, okay, well, I've got a thousand of these."

But I still hadn't been inoculated. Inoculated is not the right word. Hadn't been infected, hadn't been—there's a better word than that. Hadn't been swept away with it.

Then in '63 when Kennedy was shot was a life changer.

TS: *Because of where were you living at that point?*

MN: San Antonio, Texas. And I was walking across the courtyard and somebody up and said, "Kennedy's been killed." Everything changed and I thought, "I don't know what I'm going to do with this, but this is different. Does that happen here? What place am I in?" I didn't realize that kind of stuff happened. And then almost exactly a year later, the Beatles were on Ed Sullivan. 1964, with Davy Jones.

TS: *It was actually, like, three months later. Because I think that was February—*

MN: Well, Kennedy was '63—

TS: *Yeah, Kennedy was November '63 and Beatles was February '64.*

MN: Oh, was it February? That fast? Wow. That accounts for a big slip in my time here. And the Beatles, that just cooked my goose. "Okay, if you're making music like this, where do you go to do this?" And I thought, "Well, I don't know, but I'm going to go where it's warm. In California."

And my girlfriend was pregnant and so we set up out there and started writing songs, trying to get in the door. But I was now purveying—doing the same thing Dylan was doing: I went electric. Except nobody knew or cared. No one knew I'd ever been acoustic.

TS: *There's other stuff I want to talk to you other than the Monkees, but I'd like to ask you a couple of things about the Monkees. You're in that forced partnership. Every other group, they meet on the way up. What is that like to have to accelerate chemistry or accelerate a relationship?*

MN: Well, you can't. I was never able to do it. The relationship that I had then is the one that I have now, which is friendly and professional. You just know each other, you work with each other, and you are courteous and workmanlike. But the machine was primed and was ready to grind out one of these big things, but they had no idea that it would be this.

That this could be as big as it was. When I say big, I'm talking about the Hollywood measure of big, which is money. They didn't realize that the show—a show about this particular subject—would be so fascinating and they also didn't realize the music would be such a huge revenue generation.

And so they had done nothing about the music. They were thinking, "Well, you should have music." But basically, we're going to be unabashedly

They were, I think, shocked that the music started to become as important as it was, even before the show was on the air. I was the other way around. I had no idea they could miss that. The music was just driving me from the beginning. It's the only thing that does drive me.

I mean, I'm fascinated with the show. You're recycling Richard Lester here, that's fine. I'm a crazy, mad Beatles fan like everybody else is, but at the end of the day, you've got an opportunity to really hit the long ball and do something creative and innovative with the music. So let's do it.

And they're like, "No." And I'm like, "What?" And they were, "No."

"What are you talking about, 'No?'" I said, "Come on, this could be fun. We could play. We could play as a band, we'll play it for real. Come on guys, we could do the show right here."

"No, we want to have control of it. We're selling cologne."

I said, "Well, wow, man." And then it turned into a major power struggle among the powers that were. I was not a powers that was, I was a hired actor. I didn't have anything to say about anything. Except, "I quit." But as that was at the worst was just a nuisance.

"Oh, he quit, well, time to get another guy." That's all that would have taken.

TS: *But what was it that made it that they couldn't cross that line? Because they definitely—they didn't.*

MN: Well, in a way they did because it was only on two years. So in a way they just fired all of us. That's kind of what that was about. But, I must have walked off the show five times. I said, "Come on guys, what do you want me to do? I can't go out—I don't know what you want me to do. I'm completely lost." You know.

TS: *And at this point you're writing songs that I'm sure they did not look at as being—*

MN: Oh, they hated them.

TS: *What hopes did you have for Head? Did you think Head would put a tombstone on it?*

MN: Well, you're asking about now, you know, sort of the aesthetic arc of the Monkees and frankly, I never had much of a sense of that. I was so far outside of what was going on. I wasn't involved at all in any of the creative decisions. Not any of them.

I wasn't involved in the musical creative decisions, I wasn't involved in the filming, the music, the film. I wasn't involved in the writing of the episodes, the marketing. I didn't know anything that was going on. I just showed up and put on the shirt and the hat. Well, that was my hat, but I mean I, put it back on.

TS: *Yeah. One thing that you've always seemed to do, from The First National Band album and the record skipping on "Magnolia Simms" and these things and through Elephant Parts and through everything, it seems like you've always had an interest in playing with the form. Where do you think that comes from in you?*

MN: Well...it's there at the junction of form and function. You can't have one without the other. They feed, they drive each other, in my mind, in an important way. I've never wanted to just play with the form for no particular reason.

I think what stimulates me is innovation—true innovation, real creativity. A novel idea to me is just electrifying, so exciting. And especially if you can see it and it has this immense perspective across the heavens, some big eternal idea comes sweeping in the room. They're like angels, they're just jaw-droppers.

And they happen a lot more than you think, than one would think, than I would think. But they don't happen in just doing the same thing over and over again. They don't happen self-consciously. They don't happen because somebody gets out and tries to grind stuff together. It happens at that place where art is applied science, where it becomes a real expression of something very deep and true. And at that point it becomes very deep and new.

And when it's new like that—so, I can find that if I get inside a lot of times and deconstruct and tear apart form, tear apart function, tear apart the thing that purveys it and separate it from content.



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a SCHARPLING & WURSTER

Chris Spooner



Edited & moderated by Omar the Scrivener

After a lot of arm twisting and bathroom area taunting, some celebrity fans submitted questions to Tom Scharpling and Jon Wurster. And guess what? These two munches answered them! So put on your safety goggles, whip up a fresh batch of White Skunk Juice and become one with their cosmos.

—Omar

Paul Simms (Creator of NEWSRADIO, writer for GIRLS, FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS)

Q. Before the Scharpling & Wurster phone calls became part of the show, were there similar S&W phone calls where you two did extended interviews with each other solely for your own amusement?

Jon: Tom and I first solidified our friendship in the early-90s over the course of very long and endlessly entertaining phone conversations. We never recorded any of them but I'm sure there were quite a few funny interviews.

Tom: Yeah, I can remember just talking to Jon for hours at a time back before we did ROCK, ROT AND RULE, making each other laugh. The first notion of doing what we did on the phone over the radio was kinda scary—we were gonna do this private thing in public. There had been a couple low-level attempts at us doing stuff together prior to this; one time Jon and our friend Joe Ventura came on the show and pretended to be listeners who won a contest or something like that. But this was us jumping into the pool head first. Thankfully there was water in the pool.

Al Yankovic (Singer/song parodist)

Q. How did you decide on the order of the names in "Scharpling & Wurster"? Was it alphabetical? Size-place? Or determined by Indian leg wrestling?

Jon: The person who could name every member of The Hooters got to be first. I forgot that Adam Blatt drummed for them from '82-'83.

Omar the Scrivener (Former Best Show recapper/writer/Best Show institutional memory)

Q. Tom, are you ever going to give Norm Monroe the copy of Dokken's *Breaking the Chains* that you borrowed from him back in high school? It's time, isn't it? Any thoughts on Donald Dokken's 1990 solo album, *Up From the Ashes*?

Tom: Sorry, but I was never a huge fan of Dokken. I worked pretty hard to forget about George Lynch and resented having him creeping back into my brain when a basketball player named George Lynch joined the Los Angeles

Lakers. He was actually a part of the only version of the Lakers I have ever rooted for—the infamous “Lake Show” lineup, including Nick Van Excel and Cedric Ceballos. They were fun to watch back then, weren’t they?

Oh yeah. Dokken. I never returned that copy of Breaking the Chains because I probably traded it for a record by either 1) 1980s era Rolling Stones 2) early Hüsker Dü or 3) any Frankie Goes to Hollywood and/or Blancmange remix 12”

Kliph Scurlock (Musician, drummer for the Flaming Lips)

Q. This isn't directed at either of you, but I figure that since he was on your show, you would likely know how to get ahold of him. Will Ronald Thomas Clontle be publishing an updated edition of Rock, Rot & Rule? A lot has happened musically since the first edition was published (1997), and my friends and I have a lot of unsettled arguments.

Jon: I believe he has been hard at work on two new books: *Jazz, Rot & Rule* and *Irish Thunder: The Larry Mullen Jr. Story Pt 3*.

Tom: I actually heard that Clontle was looking to revive the CD-ROM format with a release of *Rock, Rot & Rule* that would feature ‘digital content’ created by Todd Rundgren.

Jason Woliner (Director/writer – EAGLEHEART, HUMAN GIANT)

Q. What's your writing process like? Do you guys just like get toasted and goof off? Because that's what it sounds like. I mean, you guys are nuts.

Jon: I’ve been touring quite a lot over the last five years so schedules get kind of crazy but what usually happens is Tom or I will come up with an idea on Thursday. We’ll talk over the next couple days and keep discussing the idea, adding and subtracting things. I will start writing out the idea in script form on Sunday and keep working on it usually right up until it’s performed on Tuesday night. There is always room for improv during the calls and I think that’s what makes them the most fun for both of us, the element of surprise that comes from those moments when we veer from the final script.

Tom: My favorite part of the process is when we do a final run-through of the call on Tuesday afternoon, Jon will say to me “then I’ll say a bunch of stuff that I don’t want to tell you about yet” because he keeping it fresh and wants me to be surprised. Those are always the parts of the calls I look forward to the most because I know something great is coming. And I know I have to get ready not to laugh on the air.

Paul Scheer (Comedian/actor – THE LEAGUE, creator of NTSF:SD:SUV:.)

Q. Do you have any sort of silent communication going on live during the calls, such as instant messaging or texting to direct the conversation?

Jon: Rarely. Probably a handful of times we have IM’d each other but I can’t recall a specific instance. It’s usually “Calling in 5” or “I have to peel”

Tom: Yeah, the ship sails with any of that stuff once the call starts. You get what it’s like, Paul! We’re IN IT!

Paul Simms

Q. In the moments when Wurster's character is saying something incredibly dirty that Tom has to bleep/tape delay the whole thing, is Wurster actually saying stuff, or do you just let the dead air ride until Tom comes in and says, "Whoa, whoa—you can't say that?!"

Jon: Oh, I’m saying stuff.

Patton Oswalt (Comedian/author)

Q. Is there a name for the little “hnuuh!” sound Tom makes before he says goodbye?

Tom: Yes. I call it “the shriek” or “the thing that eventually became Gary the Squirrel.”

Jason Woliner

Q. Top 3 favorite snack treats?

Jon: Any of those Lunchables™ are good with me.

Tom: Top three? How can you ask a “heartly eating” dude like myself to pick just three?! I have been known to enjoy a candy bar on occasion. I like cookies. Cakes. Pies. Brownies. Donuts. Granola. Crullers. Bowls of sugar. Trail mix. Gum. Pancakes (waffles not so much). Basically, if it is bad for me I will eat it.

Paul Simms

Q. What's an S&W phone call that despite being not-well-planned-out went very well? Conversely, has there ever been one that you two thought was going to be great that didn't end up working out well?

Jon: The “Kid e-Bay” call on the “Chain Fights” CD was only planned out until when I fall down the steps. The rest of it, all that rock and pop culture stuff, was made up as we were doing it. And I think I was actually lying on my back on the floor while we did that. This is my mom’s favorite S&W bit, which is somewhat disturbing.

Tom: I really can’t think of one that didn’t go well that we had high hopes for. There have been a couple that felt just okay afterwards, but then there’s always somebody who mentions that they liked it. It’s not my job to disabuse people of the things that they like, especially if I co-made them.

That’s something I learned from talking to comedy writers over the years—they work twice as hard to tell you why something that you liked wasn’t worth you liking. F that S! If somebody likes something I made, it’s not their fault that I pictured it coming out differently in my mind than it did. They’re actually closer to the thing than I am at that point!

Paul Scheer

Q. Was there ever a character that was introduced that was a total misfire?

Omar note: I really don't think there has ever been a “total misfire” but that author Ken Rogers was very much disliked by some people. He's the guy who wrote Five Steps to Happiness: Incorporating Your Personal Values Into the Workplace, but could not answer a single question in any appearance without lapsing into complete filthmouth. I think he called about 7 times. He claimed in one call to be “tri-polar”

Jon: I have absolutely NO memory of this call, Omar. But that does sound like an unlikeable one!

Tom: Yeah, I unlike myself for being any part of that one. Jeez. I do remember people also being mad at Rodrigo (sp?), the drum expert who revealed that he was playing a tiny drumset-shaped pin by the end of the call. But there are also Rodrigo fans out there, so let’s just label that one the *Kid A* of Best Show calls, except that it wasn’t crummy like *Kid A* was.

Omar the Scrivener

Q. There are a few characters that have played major roles in the The Best Show's fictional narrative without ever actually appearing on the show. The two most notable examples are Roy Jr. and the ubiquitous Officer Harrops. (Rumor has it that when the Newbridge cocaine craze was in full slalom, Werner was on hold, but never made it to air!) Has there ever been any discussion about their debuts? Will they forever remain in the shadows?

Jon: Tom and I have discussed this very issue several times. I think we agreed at one point that Harrops would never make an actual appearance. Many years ago we came up with an idea where Roy Jr. would call in and he would have no Philly accent whatsoever and be incredibly normal. But like Harrops, we agreed he should remain in the shadows. But you never know

Tom: Yeah, some things are better left to the imagination after a point. Just think of the scene in *Animal House* when the dean lists all the things that the

Delta House did to the school. It is infinitely funnier to picture the toilets exploding every spring than to actually see it happen!

Paul Simms

Q. Have there ever been any moments where either of you sprung some new detail on the other that made you laugh so much that it almost interrupted the phone call?

Jon: I would say every call has the element of surprise. The calls at this point are about 90% written out but there is always room for improv. My favorite thing to spring on Tom lately is the "final episode of a beloved TV show that only aired once due to its horrific ending." And he will spring stuff on me too. That's what makes it really fun for us.

Tom: My favorite thing to do to Jon is to re-state the ridiculous premise of the call back to him after he just dropped it on me. It's the only way that I know of to try to make Jon laugh. I know I've succeeded when I hear silence and then ask if he's okay and get a stifled "yup" back.

Coco Motion (Singer/guitarist/songwriter of The Ettes)

Q. What do you do when one of you is feeling particularly tickled during your show? Do you have any tricks to bring it back into focus so you don't go all giggly?

A. Seemed like a good idea to combine these two for a single answer. Note: a great example of springing a new detail is when Keith Kincaid mentions that Bryce hunted down a fox-dog for use in the satanic ritual. Tom lost it. RE: Coco's query, I believe that Tom once told The New York Times writer that he had to pinch his leg really hard to avoid losing it when Jon used the term "Husker Dude."

Jon: For the last few years when I start to laugh I'll just kind of stop talking and hold the phone away from my face. Then I'll say something like "I dropped my wallet" or "you'll never guess what I just saw." The answer, of course, being "a mouse wearing a cape." I have no idea why I said that the first time.

Tom: I remember hearing the "mouse with a cape" thing and realizing that something funny had come out of us trying not to laugh. You know what? WE ARE PRETTY GOOD AT WHAT WE DO!

And I remember laughing SO hard at that satanic ritual call.

Aimee Mann (Singer/songwriter)

Q. What is the point of insects?

Jon: Is this a fucking joke to you?

Tom: I'm with Jon on this one. We're finally getting some ink here and you're trying to change the subject back to you and your insect farm. Once and for all, I will not direct TV commercials for Aimee's Insect Hut no matter how many times you ask.

Omar the Scrivener

Q. Tom, the legendary Spike has now been calling The Best Show for 10 years. He's had a remarkable and often turbulent run, weathering countless nonstick bans and decidedly mixed reactions from listeners. However, over the past few years, he's settled into a reliable groove, and your rapport with him has gone from being somewhat contentious to a much more relaxed on-air friendship, albeit still ripe for mockery and the inevitable Heave Ho.

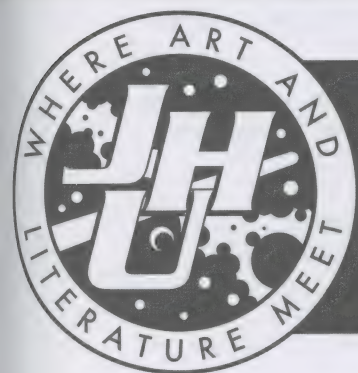
The guy who originally crashed the show with barks of "Where's Debbie?!" has become embraced as a vital part of the program's fabric. What's your take on the evolution of Spike as the show's longest-running caller? Are you a fan of his J. Wesley Shipp-themed graphic design work?

Tom: Firstly, I am a fan of anybody who calls the show and is interesting. I would rather have one "annoying" caller who helps take the show in an entertaining direction than ten well-meaning people who make the show a snooze. And that's not a dig on any specific caller and I always appreciate anybody who is brave enough to take that step and call in—I know it's not easy!

And Spike has—improbably? impossibly?—lifted himself into the ranks of the legends. He has climbed past his initial role as a Disruptor and eventually started talking about who he is and what he's all about. Seriously, can you think of anything more engaging than the whole WEIRDOS EXPOSED saga?

That said, I am not a fan of the memes he regularly creates online. They tend to lack the level of skill that I have come to expect from Facebook. I will make an exception for his "John Wesley Shipp 2016" campaign; it was bold and earthy and has me seriously considering giving the man my vote in a couple years.

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Paul Simms

Q. *Is there anything in any of the phone calls that one of you thinks is really funny that the other doesn't find that funny?*

Jon: I don't know if this pertains to this question but I don't follow sports at all so if there's a call involving this topic Tom will have to really school me on who is who. And without fail I will mangle their names.

Tom: The sports stuff is a biggie—I run out of names when it comes to football players from the past because I didn't grow up in a "football" household. But I will give Jon names for basketball players all day long if needed. The idea that Iverson has become a recurring name with the Philly Boy Roy calls never ceases to entertain me.

Kurt Braunohler (Comedian, former host of BUNK, rival to Gary the Squirrel)

Q. *I love Jon's funny voices! But we all know that level of variation is not possible without some great voice-modulation technology. Does Jon use the TDX40 digital voice, or does he go analog and use a tape-driven AlbinBox?*

Jon: TDX40.

Omar the Scrivener

Q. *Jon, if you attended a taping of VH1's That Metal Show, what would your "Stump the Trunk" question be? Do you like the band Five Finger Death Punch? What's your favorite UFO album? Would Superchunk ever play a show at Dingbatz in Clifton, NJ?*

Jon: 1) What is the connection between Sterling Morrison and AC/DC? (Malcolm Young played in an Australian band called the Velvet Underground before starting AC/DC)

2) I have never heard them but I enjoy their t-shirts.

3) The one with the song that's about sex.

4) Is this a fucking joke to you?

Paul Simms

Q. *In 12+ years of working together, have you two either had an argument or disagreement that was so serious that you needed to have a "let's-squash-the-beef" conversation? Real answers on this one, please!*

Jon: Amazingly, no! Seriously, I can't think of a time that we really butted heads on anything.

Tom: I can't think of anything either! At the risk of sounding maudlin, I know we both consider ourselves to be extremely lucky to have each other as friends and comedy partners. I feel like our relationship is only getting better.

Patton Oswalt

Q. *Has Tom ever gotten a charley horse from his finger hovering over the dump button?*

Jon: I only recently became aware of the fact that Tom has his hand over that button for the entire three hours every Tuesday night!

Tom: Yes. I sit there with my index finger on the button for three hours a night every week. There's a dumb little lid over the button that makes it even more stupid, because it's got a spring hinge on the oppsite side so my finger has been trapped in this gentle mouse trap for almost TWO THOUSAND HOURS OF MY LIFE.

Jeff Feuerzeig (Director: THE REAL ROCKY, THE DEVIL AND DANIEL JOHNSTON)

Q. *As a big fan of New Jersey comedy, I can't help wondering about the influence of Uncle Floyd and his puppet sidekick Oogie every time I hear my new favorite The Best Show character, Gary the Squirrel. Would you kindly elaborate on this if it in fact exists at all?*

A. The Uncle Floyd Show was a huge influence on me as a kid. He was pure Jersey. Knowing he was filming from your own backyard made the show that much better. There was a looseness to the show that I'm sure has influenced elements of The Best Show. But as for Oogie being an influence on Gary, I'm not so sure. I honestly don't remember a whole lot of Oogie's shtick; I remember it being a conversation between Floyd and Oogie. When Gary takes to the air, I generally leave the room and let him do his thing.

I would say that Gary is more cut from the cloth of legends like Bugs Bunny and Triumph the Insult Comic Dog. You'd have to ask him. And he's not here right now.

Omar the Scrivener

Q. *Tom, you've received a lot of well-deserved praise for your music videos the past few years (TLRx, The New Pornographers, Pretty Boy Floyd, Aimee Mann, etc.) Would you consider doing a shot-for-shot remake of the Suicidal Tendencies "Institutionalized" video with AP Mike playing Mike Muir? Who would you cast in the Jack Nance and Mary Woronov roles? Would your producers, Rob Hatch-Miller and Puloma Basu, be able to procure a vintage bandana that met your high standards for costume design?*

Tom: First things first, I never directed a Pretty Boy Floyd video.

Secondly, I am out of the "shot-for-shot remake" biz. Yes, I would throw my hat back in the ring for a chance to re-do Chicago's "Stay the Night", but I don't see that happening anytime soon.

But if I was doing an "Institutionalized" remake, I would not put AP Mike in the Mike Muir role. He would assume the Jack Nance role, a part befitting a man of his place in the world. I would see if I could get Muir himself to reprise the role. If he wouldn't do it I would cast an unknown in the part. The Mary Woronov role would probably be filled by Jen Kirkman. And of course Rob Hatch-Miller and Puloma Basu would track down the bandana—after working with them on a dozen-plus videos for lousy money, I am convinced they can do ANYTHING.

Paul Scheer

Q. *Tom, is there any truth to the rumor that you are up for the remake of President Baseball? How would you make your version different but faithful to the original film?*

Tom: I would probably consider doing it as a shot-for-shot remake, not unlike the shot-for-shot remake of Suicidal Tendencies' "Institutionalized" I am working on (see above). I would probably steer clear of Brendan Fraser for the lead role and go with someone like the young actor from WEEKEND AT BERNIE'S who played "Bratty Kid" He was good. Whatever happened to him?

Paul Simms

Q. *Have any of the real people who are gently mocked in the S&W phone calls ever confronted either of you about being gently mocked in one of the phone calls?*

Jon: Not that I'm aware of. I know Tom and I are a little disappointed the ever-litigious Gene Simmons has never sent us a cease and desist order.

Patton Oswalt

Q. *Jon, what product or company would you most like to do a commercial voiceover for?*

Jon: Salonpas.

Omar the Scrivener

Q. *Many years ago I was privy to some talk about the development of a character called "No Tongue." Do you recall this? If you do recall this, or even if you don't recall this, can you proceed with the development of a character called "No Tongue"?*

Jon: Absolutely no memory of this. Yes.

Tom: I am vetoing the development of this character. "No Tongue" will never be heard on The Best Show. Sorry!

Jason Woliner

Q. I want to talk a little bit about legacy. If all of the S&W calls were going to be destroyed, but you could save one bit, which would you choose? In other words, what's the call that you'd most want future generations to have?

Jon: Man, that is tough. The big ones for me are: Rock, Rot & Rule, Mother 13 Climb Mount Everest, The Mayubernatorial Debate and the Music Scholar but I think the one I would maybe choose is the 500th episode call where Tom gets a call from a guy in the future who tells Tom all the insane things that happened to him from 2012 to 2024.

Tom: I would agree with Jon's choices. I think you could make the case for a good Philly Boy Roy call as something that captures the spirit of what we have built. I'm also partial to the first Zachary Brimstead Esquire call because his song praising George W. Bush still makes me laugh.

And the Kenny DuPree exchange about him getting into a fight with Willie Stargell—was it Willie Stargell?—at an Arby's over a sandwich is one of my all-time favorite moments. The flip flop that Kenny DuPree did from right winger to left winger once there was money on the table always killed me, as did the lyrics to "Freedom Bombs" But maybe the Gas Station Dogs call stands as the ultimate S&W call now that I think of it!

Omar the Scrivener

Q. Tom, one of your biggest critics, the elderly political activist Charles Herbert "Chuck" Woolery, said this about you via Twitter: "I have no idea he is on some obscure public radio station living a life of quite [sic] desperation." Aside from the grammatical gaffe, what was your take on Mr. Woolery's assessment? Did it offer you some additional perspective on your radio career and The Best Show as it entered its 14th year on the air?

Tom: Honestly, I do not care about dudes like Chuck Woolery or anybody else who never actually contributed to the betterment of the entertainment industry. Guys like that are a plague on the planet—they can read from cue cards and have a square jaw but they are not actually talented.

Answering these questions has brought me to realize something that I never say out loud—Jon and I have built something that is truly special and I am proud of how much joy it has brought to people. Yes, we never got paid like Chuck Woolery did, but when it's all said and done, he will be best remembered as a punchline in a Beastie Boys song. Jon and I have added something to the continuum of Great Comedy. And that will remain long after we are dust. So suck it, Chuck.



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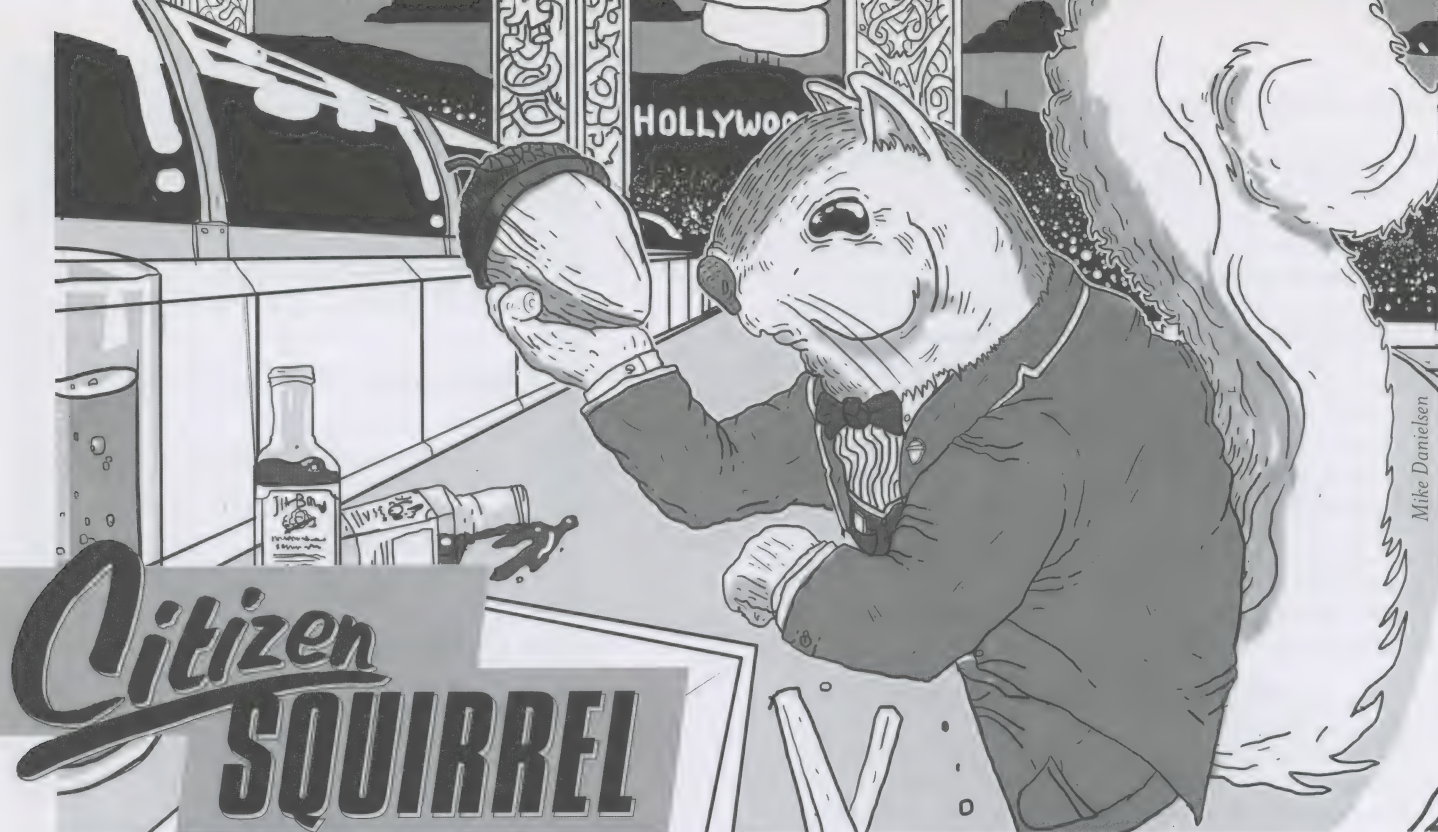
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How Gary The Squirrel Turned Mocking Mike Into An Entertainment Juggernaut *by DC Pierson*

This article was originally published in *Details* magazine, January 2014

The way Gary The Squirrel tells it, he was just stepping outside to get some privacy.

"So I'm at this industry function," he begins, "and you know how it is. Schmoozing. Glad-handing. NETWORKING! And I just popped outside to get some air, and before I know it, this drunk guy's all over me, wanting to take a picture with me. And I know that happens to normal famous people, but it happens a million times more with me, because, for better or for worse, I'm the only squirrel at most human events. So you can imagine why I don't always feel like saying 'cheese,' or, 'nuts,' which is what most of these morons think is an original joke to make."

So Gary "bopping him on the nose," as he puts it, "was inevitable. I know what people are going to say. 'Oh, he's an animal, he can't control his impulses.' I know that maybe sets back the cause of sentient woodland creatures being accepted into society. But I gotta do me. And bopping someone in the nose? That's me."

We're at a swanky West Hollywood sushi place a few blocks from where Gary lives. He's cagey about inviting me over to what I hear is a positively stunning residence. Though he might seem to belong to the world, now, there's still something very guarded and private about the world's richest, most famous squirrel.

"When I do my little boxing motion with my paws, people think that's just a funny bit of physical business, like Conan doing that 'string dance' with his hips," Gary says. "But that's just a remnant of the world I come from, how I had to survive for a lot of years. I'm from THE STREETS!"

One of Gary's many trademark vocal emphases draws the attention of a nearby table of well-put-together professional thirty-somethings, but thankfully, they do little more than raise a few glasses in his direction.

"Hey, how ya doin' " Gary mumbles listlessly. Something about the moment seems to strike him, and he turns his black-eyed gaze out onto Santa Monica Boulevard, where purple twilight is giving way to neon night. He sighs.

"Look, it's not that I take that kind of thing for granted. .Hey, I could still be back in that apartment with Vance, trying to get two bucks together but it's just exhausting, you know?"

Gary The Squirrel has every reason in the world to be exhausted.

Between hosting his highly-rated late night talk show *Nuts!* (though the show was originally an adaptation of his cult-favorite podcast-within-a-radio-show "Comedians Are Nuts!" it quickly became clear that the comedian guests were merely diluting the pure Gary id for which audiences were tuning in in droves, and the comedians were soon dropped both from the title and from the format) and a punishing world-wide touring schedule, Gary seems hellbent on providing the public with as much of him as his little body is physically capable of providing. Yet, the public seem to want still more.

Despite the scale of Gary the Squirrel's media empire, the formula hasn't changed: Gary makes fun of Mike, his sidekick. Mike awkwardly attempts to strike back at Gary. Gary makes fun of Mike again. Again, Mike jabs back. Gary then butters Mike up with a half-sincere faux-apology, which Mike tentatively accepts, setting Gary up to deliver an insulting knock-out punch. It's a simple, wildly successful recipe that, like all great comedy, has its foundations in some very real pain.

"Back when we were on that radio thing, Mike made this little song parody that was kinda like 'Weird' Al meets Buffalo Bill from *Silence Of The Lambs*," Gary recalls. "About halfway through he mumbles, 'I'll feed you garbage.' I couldn't get over it. I don't eat garbage! For whoever's making fun of me, that kind of thing is a quick and easy laugh. For me, it's something I've been facing my whole life. And that's when I knew, alright, I gotta go hard at this guy."

For Gary, "going hard" meant engaging in some brilliant, counter-cyclical comedic data mining. In an alt-comedy scene obsessed with novelty and innovation, Gary steeped himself in some of the oldest and seemingly stodgiest, comedy around: jokes and insults gleaned from joke-books produced around the time the popular TV show *Mad Men* takes place.

It worked.

While as recently as a year ago, your average comedian might have blanched at the idea of delving into dusty volumes of old semi-ribald roast humor for direct inspiration, it's now de rigueur for stand-ups on the make. In comedic circles, everyone knows someone who's said to be "doing Gary," that is to say, an off-brand version of Gary's unique post-modernist neo-Borscht Belt style. One need merely to stick his head in to any hip alt-comedy venue in New York or Los Angeles to hear a too-cool-for-the-room comic begging the attendees to "take his wife, please." Depending on who you ask, shadow Garys can even be found in the highest echelons of stand-up. Aziz Ansari's latest stand-up album *Cheap-os, Drunks and Dummies* was criticized by such popular comedy blogs as *Guffawesome* and *Laffcaster* as being, at best, a very loving homage to Gary the Squirrel.

"I don't worry about anyone biting my style, 'cause they can't do it how I do it," Gary confides. "It's about delivery! Re-contextualization! PASTICHE!"

I ask if other people might also struggle to make Gary's style work for them because they don't have a Mike.

"Next question," says Gary.

Gary's ushering in an era of nouveau-Catskills humor has been a boon to more than just weirdos selling moth-eaten joke books on eBay: the authors of those books, if they haven't succumbed to drink, drugs, old age, or the supreme melancholia of being made completely obsolete, have suddenly, improbably, found their services in high demand once again. Gary hand-picked seven of them to form the core of the writing staff for *Nuts!*

His staff looks like no other writer's room in the business. He employs such 1960s comedic also-rans as Goof Taylor, Ray "Wiseguy" Weinstein, and even Bartosz Abramczyk, a legendary screenwriter who wrote joke books prolifically under the pen name Full O. Beans to make ends meet after being blacklisted during The Red Scare. They're all massively grateful to be given the chance to strap on their suspenders once again. One writer, speaking on condition of anonymity, confesses he literally had a gun to his temple in a gin-soaked Pacoima flophouse, and would have pulled the trigger had one of his low-life neighbors not banged on his door and let him know that Gary the Squirrel was trying to reach him on the house's single hallway telephone.

Abramczyk recalls his first day at the office: "I have a million questions for Gary, you know," he says in a thick Polish accent. "And he simply says, shhhh, shhhh, and points at Mike and says, 'Drunk. Cheap. Dumb.' And I said, 'Thank you,' and I sat down at my typewriter."

Is Mike complaining about an entertainment empire being built around a this negative three-word caricature of him?

When I find him at his penthouse in downtown Los Angeles, the only thing he's complaining about is that delivery to the penthouse of a giant slice of the actual boat from the film *Fitzcarraldo* was being held up by an incompetent doorman.

"But as far as Gary making fun of me," Mike says, "who should I complain to? My agent, my accountant, my maid, my chauffeur?"

Mike has used the proceeds from his Gary-aided rise to prominence to become one of the world's leading collectors of Werner Herzog memorabilia, and has embraced the Hollywood lifestyle full-stop. Now when one hears the trademark "tch-koo" of Mike cracking open a can, it's far more likely to be coconut juice or yerba mate iced tea than his once-beloved Coors Light.

While Gary's relationship with his adoring fans and with success itself seems fraught with self-recrimination and haunted by past demons, Mike's feelings on the subject are as uncomplicated and serene as the clear L.A. day that's permitting us a rare view of the glittering Pacific from Mike's wrap-around balcony.

"It's a good life," Mike says, "and if it's really all because one time I told Gary that he eats garbage, then hey, I'll still feed him garbage. I'll feed him garbage forever."

When I ask Tom Scharpling, host of *The Best Show On WFMU* and the man credited by those in the know with granting Gary his early exposure, about The Squirrel, he doesn't have much to say.

"The nut," he says. "The fact that he still carries that nut around tells you everything you need to know." Scharpling refuses to say more. We exchange pleasant goodbyes shortly afterward and he hangs up.

Armed with this cryptic, almost Rosebud-like key to symbolic meaning, I see Gary again that night at The Smokehouse in Burbank, an old-school Hollywood haunt across the street from the Warner Brothers lot where Gary's show tapes. Its charm jibes nicely with Gary's nu-Elk's Club approach to comedy, and his writers relish the chance to drink beneath yellowing black-and-white photographs of the once more-successful peers who hounded them into obscurity. After throwing back a few martinis with his ancient staff, Gary steps out for some air, much as he did the night of the fateful "bop on the nose" incident.

I tag along, and, having had a few martinis myself, finally screw up the courage to ask Gary about the acorn that is forever clutched in his right hand, an always-visible but rarely commented-upon element of the GTS mystique.

"Oh that?" Gary says. "Huh. I almost don't think about it anymore, but... huh, how can I put this. It reminds me I'm still a squirrel, you know? And all the limos and all the weekends in Palm Springs can't change that. I'm a squirrel, but I'm a squirrel on my terms."

I allow myself an unvoiced pet theory: Gary The Squirrel steps out for air so frequently because the night breeze is a stark reminder of the natural world from which he emerged.

"And the other squirrels out there? That's who I do this for. I do it for the squirrel who has the ability to talk and hold down an apartment but hasn't come out of the woods yet," Gary says. "Maybe they watch my show through a window from a branch outside some body's house. I do it for that squirrel. Did I ever want to be the spokesman for talking squirrels? No, but I can speak, so—"

Gary halts mid-sentence as the Santa Ana winds blow a discarded food wrapper right by us on the sidewalk. Its trashy glint catches Gary's eye. He seems to grasp the acorn even tighter, if that's possible.

"Mike was right," Gary says, his voice rich with uncommon resolve. "I do eat garbage. But not the physical kind. I take the emotional garbage, all the pain, all the years of being 'less than,' and I turn it into entertainment."

Gary turns to rejoin his staff inside, then pauses in the doorway. He gazes across the street to the billboard on the side of the studio that advertises his show to thousands of passing commuters each day. On the billboard, just the nut in his hand might be bigger than he and his old roommate Vance's apartment. He's big now, just as he is big in this town, in this world.

Gary The Squirrel sighs.

"You have to eat garbage," he says. "Or else the garbage will eat you."



"This is probably my favorite thing in the whole magazine!!!"

AN UNRELEASED ROBIN COOPER TIMEWASTER LETTER!

For people unaware of the brilliance of Robin Cooper, let me explain. Cooper is the alter ego of British comedian Robert Popper of LOOK AROUND YOU and FRIDAY NIGHT DINNER fame. For years he has been writing letters to organizations and government offices with ridiculous requests, prompting a correspondence that gets funnier and funnier with each letter. They are not pranks in the "let's dress up as Target employees and ruin everybody's day" way; Cooper/Popper is always the butt of the joke and nobody is made to feel the worse for it. Popper was kind enough to contribute a never-published Timewaster Letter and for that we thank him. Pick up his books and hear his equally ridiculous phone calls over at <http://www.robincooper.co.uk>

—Tom

Robin Cooper
Brondesbury Villas
London

John Eyler
Chief Executive
Toys R Us
FREEPOST NAT 3362,
Gateshead NE10 8BR

26th November 2005

Dear Mr Eyler,

First of all I would like to greet you with cries of "Merry Christmas", "Joyous Yuletide" and "Benfedimor Helvestrige!" May all the best become of you all your WONDERFUL staff at Toys R Us.

THE GREATEST TOY STORE IN THE WORLD!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Allow me to introduce myself – I am Robin Cooper, toy demonstrator. I have toy demonstrated for 9 years all over Europe (excluding Eire), with great success. I have even appeared on the News.

Mr Eyler – I have something great in store (excuse the pun!) for you.

At 10:30am On Friday 23rd December, I shall be holding a special, impromptu Christmas toy demonstration in the Lakeside Thurrock Branch of Toys R Us. Even though I have not been formally invited, I know you're gonna love it!

I have secured the rights to the 'Flying Potato Plane', a device made from the skins of burnt and rotten potatoes that glides through the air, thanks to the delicate peel wings and steel propeller blades. I aim to fly a dozen potato planes (each one has a wing span of approx 3-4 feet) simultaneously throughout the store, whilst dressed as the Christmas Goblin (a character of my own invention).

What I want to know is – will you be able to clear a space for me prior to my arrival? I will require an area of 40 x 60 feet, plus a curtained-off zone from where I can peel my potatoes in private.

You may be interested to know that several radio stations will be in attendance. So this should be fabulous press for Toys R Us.

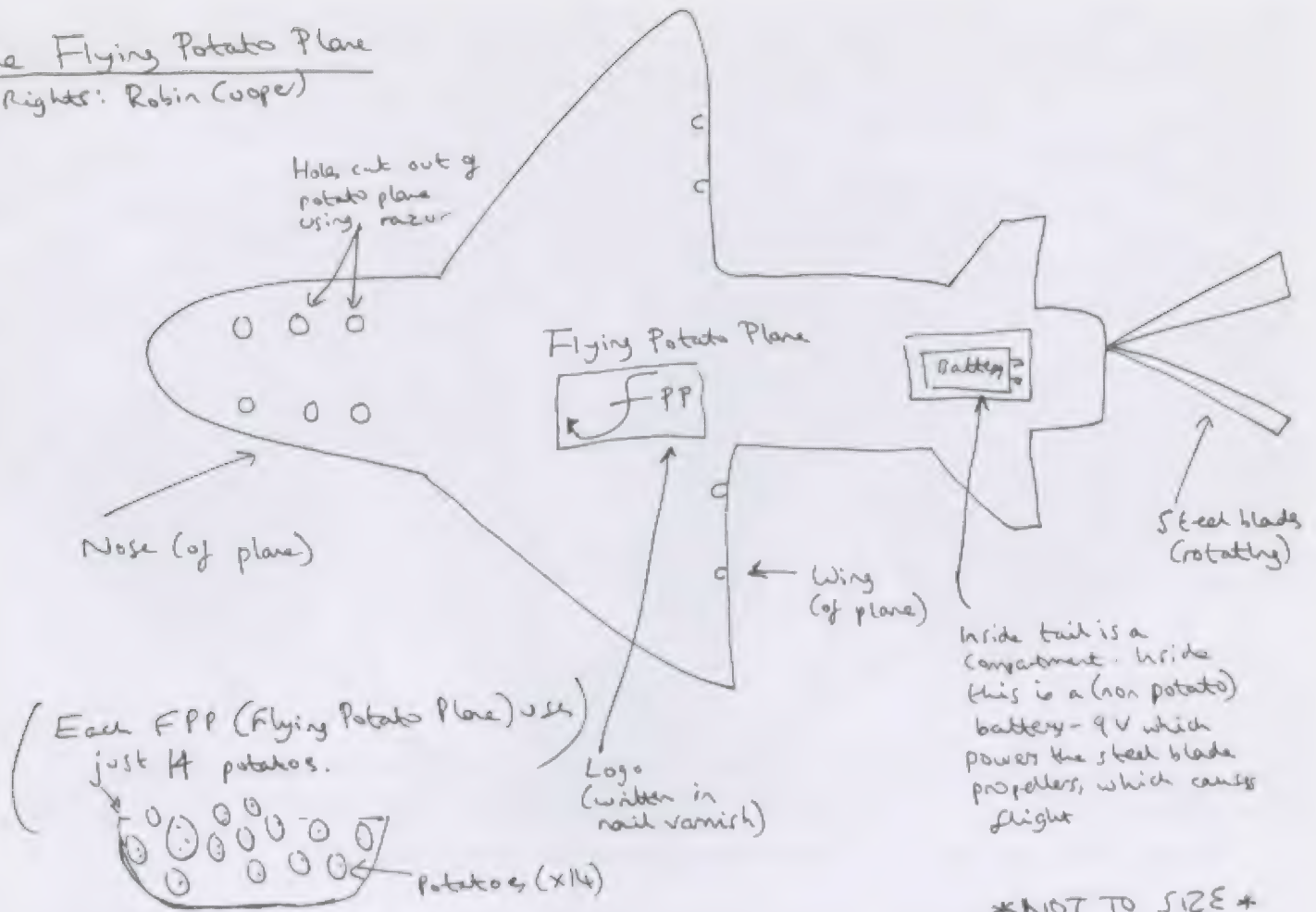
I look forward to hearing from you – or seeing you then.

Best wishes,

Robin Cooper

The Flying Potato Plane

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Mr Robin Cooper
Brondebury Villas
London

16th December 2005

Dear Mr Cooper

Thank you for your letter of 26th November regarding the 'Flying Potato Plane'.

As you confirm in your letter, you have not been formally invited and I regret that for reasons of both space availability and safety, we will be unable to accede to your request. On the issue of safety, I am sure you would share our concerns given the substantial number of babies and children who will be in the store at the time.

Please feel free to contact me further on the number above if you feel we can be of any further assistance.

Yours sincerely



 Adrian Wurr



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++ WALLPAPER "DOMESTIC LANDSCAPE ACTIVITIES" (1994) ++

A PEEK INSIDE TOM'S NOTEBOOK



"Whoooooooo!!!!!"

by Tom Scharpling

For the last eight or so years I have used notebooks to keep track of what I set out to accomplish for every show. I write down whether there's a S&W call, things that need to be announced, topics that I hope to kick around with callers and pretty much any random thought or notion that could be turned into radio gold. Or radio bronze, at least. Okay, radio aluminum.

The end result is that I've filled up three notebooks with tons of words and phrases. Some of them still make sense years later—I've never stopped talking about Kevin Smith no matter how hard I try!—and others just seem like random scraps of insanity that didn't find a home that Tuesday.

I was pleasantly surprised at how weirdly poetic these phrases were when stacked next to each other. But, on the other hand, I have to say stuff like that because this list makes me sound more like a guy who would work the Lyndon LaRouche table outside the post office than someone striving for radio greatness.

Picked up garbage in parking lot – I'm done

Scharpling Boom Baye!

Hostel 2 poster – we get it.

Genius grant – come on

Judge Smails jacket

Evening News – who cares? Except Anastos

Mom in Olive Garden commercial

Forgiveness

Puppy Bowl sucks now

*Michael Jackson's death – I see me when I see him...
poor sad mutant*

People who load the wrong images onto iTunes

*FedEx – build another plane or put 1,000 boxes out there
instead of dropping 3 million on a 60 second spot*

Russell Brand

I'm neither fish nor fowl! Not NPR, not toilet mouth!

America runs on Dunkin' – a morbidly obese man doing the VO

Decemberists (written six weeks in a row)

Floyd/Rickles/Floyd/Floyd

C'mon guys

Becoming a snob

JV and Elvis – Goons Nick DiPaolo

Micky Dolenz

I'm gonna start punching people out

*Guy at diner – "I like fat chicks" – he looked like the brother of Turtle
on Entourage, the one that didn't get the good genes*

Pawn Stars In Space

I could be a criminal if I wanted

"Goofy"

*Life is hollow without Lopez Tonight – did not know the ratings were
so bad – they should replace him with Massa's Tavern*

Dads Vs. Grads

If I'm _____, then something went horribly wrong

Harmony Korine Bud commercials

DICK

Beatle boots – on my own with this

EGG SALAD

Douchepedia

Bernie Mac opposite of Carlin

Radio Greats weekend – what about me?

This is Humanity 101

Star Wars novelization – can't get in to see Clone Wars

I need something named after me!

My Chemical Romance drummer

Ron Paul video game

Come on. Enough is enough.

I Will Talk To Drunks

We are winning this thing

Henry Winkler

I don't want to be here tonight

Famous People Who Nobody Likes

Rick Stevens

Competitive Scientology

Paul Blart – Malibu's Most Wanted

Improv Everywhere book?!?!

The play by Larry D. Pervert – PRINT OUT

Eggheads hate this show

Guy yelling "Win a beer bong!"

Who saw Transformers 2? Call in.

Lightbulb dude

Muppet Movie = hot garbage

"Beer gut"

Mike begged me to see BAD LIEUTENANT

Curb – the only thing I laughed at was Panda Express cup

Blowing your nose in public – two times is limit

'The Good Stuff'

Come on, guy.

I HATE HIM...

Dolenz invention

10 days in 2010 – Enemies enjoy it, the gates are going up

Bam Margera has directed more and written more books than me

Seinfeld/Leno/Conan

Vent at the other

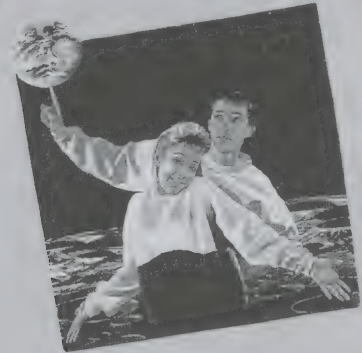
Celebrities in jail

You Made Your Point Now Move On

continued on pg 39

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"Ooops, ALL HITS!"



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Fables of the Preconstruction: The Jason from Huntsville Story



"Had me ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing)!!!!"

by Jason Sims

Although most callers to The Best Show on WFMU are ordinary people, you might be surprised to learn that some of your favorites are actually carefully crafted by a team of dedicated experts. At WillCall Productions Inc., we've helped talk radio shows supplement and spice up their phone banks for over 25 years. Like most corporations, we're always looking for ways to give back to our community, and, since our community is radio, providing interesting callers for a listener-supported endeavor like Tom Scharpling's Best Show is the perfect way to do just that.

Over the years our team has had its hits (classic callers like Spike, Julie from Cincinnati and Fredericks from New Port Richey) and its misses (four-star flops like Clark, James and Zach from Mit Hamine.) While most of our characters tend toward the extreme, a few years ago we decided to try something new: an everyman. This was the beginning of the character known as Jason from Huntsville.

Nothing succeeds like success, so we started by looking at the show's stable of Super Callers for inspiration. While we could have used the English charm of a Samir from Florida or the East Coast sophistication of an Erica from Baltimore as our template, the team agreed that the down home wit and wisdom of a Dave from Knoxville would be a good foundation from which to base a caller who would provide a nice contrast to Tom's fast-talking Jersey boy persona. Dave was immediately hired as a consultant.

We decided a punk rock, jab-trading program like The Best Show needed a serving of safe comfort on the side. Everyone says they want danger and edge, but sometimes even the jaded sophisticates who tune into WFMU need to be wrapped in a warm quilt. This character would be folksy, jovial and non-con-troversial, with an "aw, shucks" de-meanor that would go down as smooth as a mint julep on a hot summer evening. We'd keep him right between the lines intellectually and socio-economically as to arouse neither envy nor pity.

Comfort is good, but it's also boring. To offset the snooze factor, we decided to drop him in a classic Southern grotesque setting. We created a place where rocket scientists and rednecks were next door neighbors, monkeys in pink diapers ride on vans and hoarders dismantle squatters' mobile homes: the fictional city of Huntsville, Alabama. This generous dose of Flannery O'Connor freakery would give our caller just enough weirdness to hold listener's attention as well as illustrate the paradox of the human condition. In short, a win-win.

The most critical step in the process was finding someone to give a voice to our creation. We toyed with having Dave do it, but no matter how much we modulated his voice, the focus groups could always tell it was him. Auditions were a bust. One day, while our casting director was riding the subway to meet with 30 Rock's Jack McBrayer about donating his time for the project, she overheard a passenger on his cell phone asking in a languid drawl if "Bugtussle Bill" had felt

the breeze at the Possum Festival. That young man was Doug Steffy, who had moved to New York from Alabama to pursue his lifelong dream of being a trolley driver. She brought him in to read for the part and everyone agreed he was the one for the job. As he had no luck finding any trolleys to drive, he happily signed on.

The only thing left was to give our creation a name. I, the CEO of WillCall, was so proud of the work our staff had done that I gave him my own name: Jason. Jason from Huntsville was born.

But how would the listeners react? At first, the response was underwhelming. His approval numbers hovered somewhere between first time callers and the Kid Who Calls from a Bathroom. Were his quaint folkways too unrelatable? Was his accent too indecipherable?

With one more call in our contract, the writers, demoralized and strapped for ideas, dug up an early script from the slush pile that had been rejected for being too silly. This turned out to be the "Monkey Riding On a Van" call.

The success of the "Monkey" call exceed our wildest dreams. We got picked up for 12 more calls, and made enough off the licensing of stuffed Van Monkeys to more than make up for the time and money invested in the project. Ever generous, we donated .01 % of all profits back to WFMU

But, like Biggie said: "Mo money, mo problems." Doug, who had been content to work for three hots and a cot (literally, three boxes of

Red Hots candy and a cot in our supply closet,) suddenly realized how valuable his voice work was. He threatened to quit if he didn't get a raise, but our crafty Yankee lawyers had him dead to rights. Tensions rose until, in the middle of a call, he unexpectedly burst into an expletive-laced tirade against our company and, for reasons unknown, the Knights Templar. Tom's quick dump button finger was able keep most of it off the air, and we were able to have all traces of it expunged from the archives.

Still, the damage was done. Station management demanded he be fired and we had to oblige. We resigned ourselves to retiring the character until comedian and gifted mimic Kevin Pollak agreed to take over voicing duties in exchange for

early release from The Hate Pit. Go back into the archives and see if you can tell when the switch happened.*

We thank Tom, AP Mike and all listeners for believing in the character, taking him into your hearts, and for supporting the couple of podcasts, trilogy of coloring books and line of Alabammy Comet energy drinks we've spun off from him.

Like Jason says in his trademarked sign off, "Y'all Have a Good Night."

**It's the one where the guy takes the trailer apart piece by piece.*



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BUT I GOTTA GO"
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NN'13



"Can't say enough good
#stuff about this!"



JH: Oh, brother.

Mike: Is this any way to begin an intelligent discussion, John? The sighs, the grumbling, the audible beneath-the-breath comments: when will it end? Can we try to put our differences aside for the moment and treat this as a high-minded literary discussion?

Shall we get started? What was the best book you read last year?

JH: *ULTIMATE BURN* by Magnus Allister, writing as Richard P. Slocum. It is the story of a deadly but dashing rogue black ops agent with a mustache who is trying to track down the "Man With Creepy Luggage" through post-Chernobyl Russia.

Mike: Ah. So we're going to keep this light-hearted. see. I thought we might have a serious discussion ala *The New York Times Book Review's* "By the Book" interview. In that case, what was your favorite adult periodical (i.e. "spank mag") as a young man?

JH: *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* (but only the lingerie specials).

Mike: What is your preferred literary genre? Any guilty pleasures?

JH: The HIGH and the LOW! This teetering between "preferred literary genre" and "spank mag" has really got me seasick. Why I am answering all the questions? What about YOU, Mike: what is your preferred literary porn journal?

Mike: I let my *Penthouse* subscription lapse many moons ago when I went digital. I'll thumb through it occasionally in a Barnes & Noble, but it's just a ghost of its former, raunchier self. Remember the pictures of Bob Guccione and his toupee? Funny stuff!

JH: I do NOT remember those things. The picture of you at one of the last remaining Barnes and Noble thumbing through *Penthouse*, however, is immediately iconic in my mind: one of the seminal (if you'll forgive the puns) images in Ken Burns documentary on the death of print publishing.

Let me ask you this: did you thumb through one copy? Or did you make sure to thumb through ALL the copies?

And what is your favorite NON-pornographic book, film, and TV show. DO NOT WAIT FOR THE TRANSLATION. ANSWER NOW.

Mike: Ah, loosen up, John. The fact that adolescents have access to soft porn in chain bookstores has to be one of the great advances of the modern age. No more sneaking around, no more standing around in the parking lots of adult bookstores waiting for an older guy to smuggle out a copy of *High Society* for you. Certainly, you can appreciate this new found freedom.

I'll generally thumb through one copy. That's enough for me to realize that time is crushing everything I once loved and that my days are numbered.

My favorite non-pornographic book is *Anna Karenina*. That one's pretty hard to top. How 'bout yourself?

JH: I must confess that I have never read *Anna Karenina*. I am actually pretty deficient in the classics, because I went to an alternative high school,

and then I studied short story writing in the 90s, so I have basically read 100 *Years of Solitude* and *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love* 100 times and that is it.

So please give me a brief synopsis of the novel *Anna Karenina*, and tell me what it is about it that speaks to The Man From Bayonne.

Mike: *Anna Karenina* is about a mad ship captain and his quest to kill a giant white whale. There's also a subplot about a young boy and an escaped slave floating down a river on a raft. My favorite part, though, is about a teenage boy who stands in a field near the edge of a cliff making sure playing children don't take a tumble (this is exactly how I feel when I'm tending bar at Massa's Tavern). You should really check it out. I think you would love it.

By the way, when are we going to get that drink at Massa's you keep promising?

JH: First of all, I am disappointed that you did not answer my question about *Anna Karenina* sincerely. NOT EVERYTHING HAS TO BE A JOKE, YOU KNOW.

To prove it: I recently read *Watership Down* again for the first time in years with my daughter, and we both ended up in tears. Line by line it is has some of the best and most moving writing I've read, and the best part is that it is NOT an allegory. It is not secretly about human society. It is actually just a book about rabbits being noble and brutal to each other, told wholly from a rabbit's point of view, and outlining an entire rabbit cosmology. Also, it is extremely violent. And it is for children. So NOT ONLY is it one of the most beautiful books I've read, it is also COLOSSALLY WEIRD, which is my favorite combination.

And once again: I cried at the end.

So let it out, Mike. It doesn't have to be all porn and pop culture references. I know you have more in your creepy luggage than that.

And we WILL meet at Massa's, and I WILL then present you with your new vintage Samsonite suitcase. And there WILL be pics, because it IS going to happen. Can we get the photos in before this baby goes to print?

Mike: I apologize. I was just busting your balls (it's a habit). Actually, *Anna Karenina* is such a great book that for me to try to summarize it in a few sentences felt like an insult. Let's just say that Tolstoy created the most realistic characters dealing with the most important themes a human being is likely to experience during their lifetime. In other words, *Anna Karenina* encompasses all of life in a way that I have never encountered in a book before or since. And, I'm not ashamed to admit, certain passages were so moving that, like your experience with *Watership Down*, I was reduced to tears.

I haven't read *Watership Down*, although I once owned a copy. I will seek it out again and possibly share it with my niece (she's more of a bird person, though) upon your recommendation.

Regarding your offer to present me with "uncreepy luggage" at Massa's, just say the word and we'll make arrangements.





The LA-TI-DA Records Singles Club 2013

6 singles. \$33 Canada/USA. Color vinyl for the first 150 subscribers.

The Wild Ones-(SANTA CRUZ CA) LTDR014

Day Drunk / Come Around

Maniac-(LA CA) LTDR015

Dim Sum / Pepe

The Ballantynes-(VANCOUVER BC) LTDR016

Faith / Velvet

The Jay Vons-(BROOKLYN NY) LTDR017

Night / Days Undone

Needles//Pins-(VANCOUVER BC) LTDR018

Outta This Place / Date Night

(You Bring the Napalm)

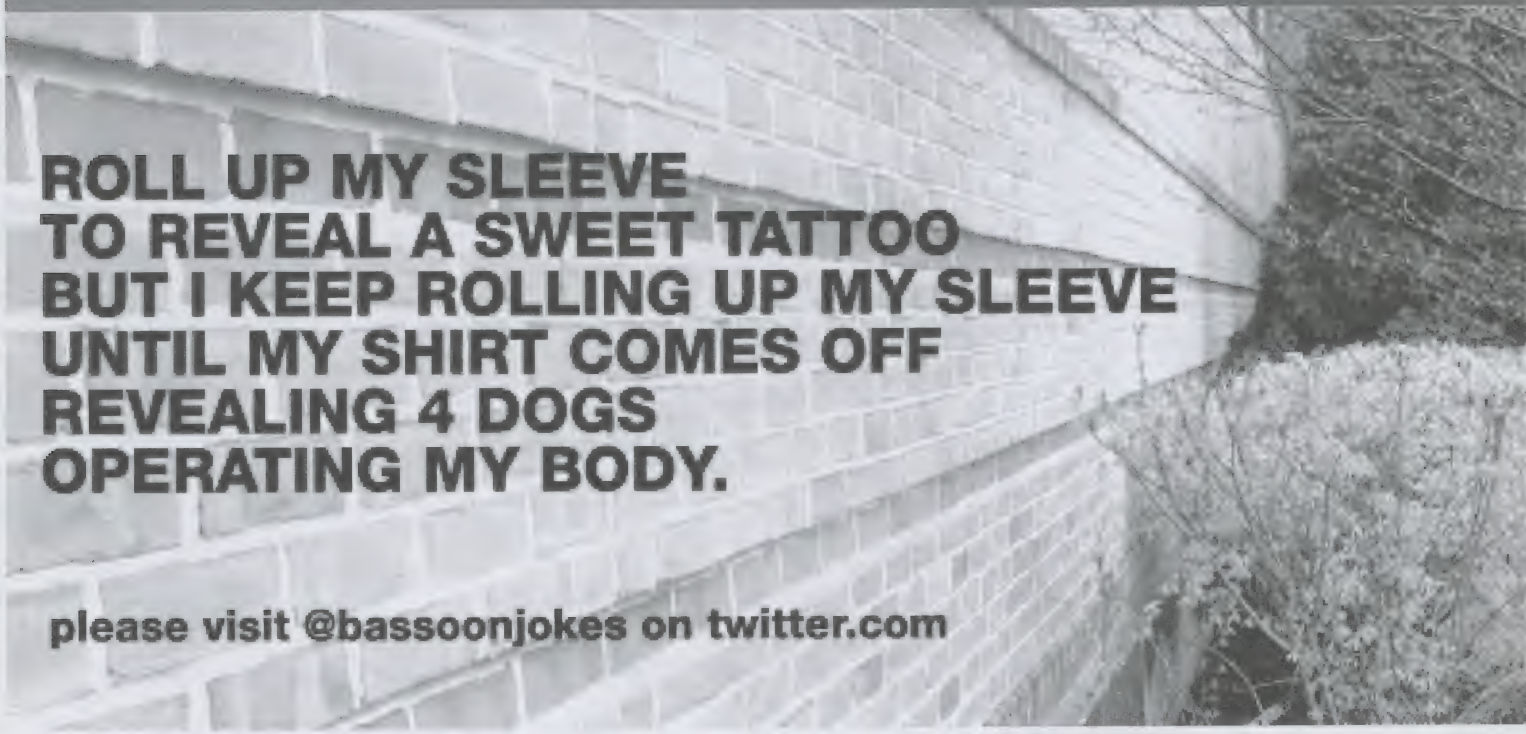
Steve Adamyk Band-(OTTAWA ON) LTDR019

High Above / Hate Myself /

A Promise Is A Promise



LATIDARECORDS.COM



**ROLL UP MY SLEEVE
TO REVEAL A SWEET TATTOO
BUT I KEEP ROLLING UP MY SLEEVE
UNTIL MY SHIRT COMES OFF
REVEALING 4 DOGS
OPERATING MY BODY.**

please visit @bassoonjokes on twitter.com

BEST SHOW DRINKING GAME

by Maggie Serota

Drink...

every time Tom refers to a child or pre-teen caller as "young man."

Sip...

every time Tom uses one of his malapropisms. (For example, "Funzie" instead of Fonzie, "pervert" instead of pervers, "Adam Carollo" instead of Adam Carolla, etc.)

Sip...

when you hear the "Chik-u" of AP Mike opening a beer

Sip...

every time Tom sings.

Extra sip...

if Tom sings any instrumental parts.

Finish...

if Tom sings a drum part. Pour yourself a new drink and down it if Tom is singing an original song he's making up on the spot, ala "L.A. Podcast."

Sip...

any time Tom talks about firing AP Mike.

2 Sips...

if he talks about it in hushed tones as if Mike can't hear.

While this may be a drinking game, we recommend playing this with shots of ginger ale or apple juice or anything that doesn't involve alcohol. Water looks like gin or vodka, and it's less likely to make you pass out should Tom mention "Funzie" 8 times in a hour. Although there are many repeat themes that easily belong on the list, I tried to make this one a little bit of a challenge.

So, pour a tumbler of your favorite beverage, turn on your radio or Internet, kick your feet up, and play along from anywhere in the world.



Sip...

anytime Tom publicly sanctions a new podcast.

2 sips...

if he launches into a rant about how every L.A. podcast books the same 6 guests.

3 sips...

if he refers to those guests as some variation of "hamsters on a wheel."

Sip...

anytime Tom has to stop because he's laughing at one of his own jokes.

Sip...

anytime Wurster mentions another character from the Newbridge universe during a call. For example, if Philly Boy Roy is calling, sip if he mentions Bryce, Judge Davies, Timmy von Trimble, etc.

Finish...

if it is a character that exists in the Newbridge universe, but has never called in, i.e. Officer Harrops.

Baby Sip...

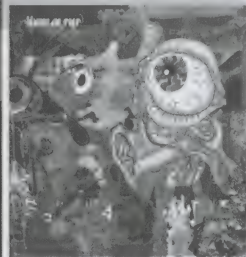
whenever Wurster works in one of his own malapropisms. i.e. "Winter of our disotheque" for "winter of our discontent" or "persona au gratin" for "persona non grata" etc.



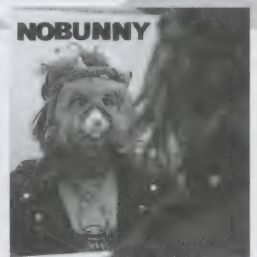
"Laughter is the best
#medicine and I just
got a dose from this!!!"

GONER RECORDS

WE HAVE BEEN A MEMPHIS
RECORD LABEL SINCE 1993
AND A REAL STORE SINCE
2004. OUR RELEASES IN-
CLUDE JAY REATARD, KING
KHAN BBQ SHOW, TY SEGALL,
NOBUNNY, EX CULT, GUITAR
WOLF, TOY LOVE, REIGNING
SOUND, QUINTRON, CAR-
BONAS, OBLIVIANS, JOHN
WESLEY COLEMAN, HARLAN T
BOBO AND MANY MORE.
PUNK ROCK - GARAGE ROCK
SOMETHING OR OTHER.
WE LIKE IT.
WE HAVE NEW RECORDS OUT
NOW:



HUMAN EYE
4: INTO UNKNOWN



NOBUNNY
SECRET SONGS

GONER FEST

OUR TENTH GONERFEST IS
COMING SEPTEMBER 26-29 IN
MEMPHIS, TN
OVER 30 BANDS
INCLUDING
MUDHONEY
COSMIC PSYCHOS
AND MANY MANY MORE

GREAT BANDS, BEER, & BBQ
THIS IS YOUR FESTIVAL.
JUST ASK TOM.

FOR MORE INFO GO TO
GONERFEST.COM

GONER

GONER-RECORDS.COM

Sip...

anytime Wurster mentions a band
from the Philadelphia area, i.e. The
Hooters, Electric Love Muffin, Flag
of Democracy or Dead Milkmen.

Sip...

anytime a caller attempts to revive
a topic that has officially been
taken off the table.

Sip...

anytime Tom asks a
British/Australian or similarly
accented caller to attempt an
American accent.

2 Sips...

if they comply.

Finish...

if Tom giggles.

Sip...

anytime a caller talks over Tom.

2 Sips...

if the caller gets yelled at by Tom.

Finish...

if the caller gets yelled at for trying
to sing along with Tom.

Sip...

any time Tom does a celebrity
impression i.e. Donald Trump.

Baby Sip...

any time Tom does his impression
of Mike.

Chug-a-lug...

Volcano Suns!

Sip...

anytime Tom invents a new
nickname for himself i.e
"The Dollar Menu Dickens" or
"The King of Free Entertainment."

Sip...

any time Tom manages to work
a reference to the TV show
Happy Days into a seemingly
unrelated conversation.

Sip...

whenever Spike unveils a new
celebrity nickname, ala "Baked Ziti-
Jones". It has to be new, not
one he's used on the show before.

Sip...

any time Tom spontaneously comes
up with a treatment for a movie or
TV show on air, ala Staten Island
Garbage Rats or Invisible Hipster.

Good luck. Have fun. And most
importantly, stay out of the
emergency room. We're only born
with one liver.

This Radio Show Could Be Your Life

by Samir Mathur

January 2007 I had just received the grades for my first semester of law school, and let's just say that it was bad news. Not quite "this was a terrible mistake, time to look into international cocaine smuggling" bad, but certainly the kind of thing that required a serious reconsideration of my long-term professional goals. Instead of doing the required soul-searching, though, I went to Fluxblog. Now, I was a semi-regular reader of "the very first MP3 blog," but one of the files author Matthew Perpetua posted that day caught my eye. Underneath a song by Courtney Tidwell was something named "The Hero's Call." At that point, I had never heard of Scharpling and Wurster, but the description intrigued me. I downloaded the file, and it's only moderate hyperbole to say that it changed my life.

When the mp3 stopped playing, I had to hear it again. Immediately. This time, I jotted down all the reference points in the conversation: The Subway Hero. Julius Caesar. Colonel Sanders. Magnum PI. Walter Cronkite. Wolf Blitzer, the producer of The Cars' self-titled record and most of Candy-O. At least half of the other names went over my head, but even so, I was in love. Did he really say "Now is the summer of our discotheque"? What does "turn this place into a car wash" mean? And did he really threaten to murder the host at the end? I'd never heard such hyper specific, pop-culture-savvy comedy before.

After that, I quickly, and to the severe detriment of my academic development, worked my way through the decade-long back catalog. At first it was just the Jon Wurster calls that grabbed my attention - the extremely silly but fully-realized, broad-yet-specific characters. I previously didn't know anything about Philadelphia (youse have some sort of bell?), but now I knew of the towns of Manayunk, Yardley and Upper Darby, where Tina Fey is from. Thanks to Bryce Prefontaine and Zachary Brimstead, Esq., I could hold my own in conversations about The Grateful Dead and barbershop music. Admittedly, I was never called into such conversations, but if I were, I'd be prepared. My girlfriend made me promise, in writing, to stop saying "wait, whaaaaaat?" Whatever this was, I was in it pretty deep.

It took me a little longer to fully appreciate Tom's soliloquizing, but stories like the time he watched Papa Roach play basketball (10.14.08), and stayed at a haunted hotel in Los Angeles (11.3.09) soon became some of the funniest things I'd ever heard. On the other end of the emotional spectrum, I have

strong memories of sitting in my sister's apartment, listening to the Dogmo tribute episode. And though I barely remember how I reacted to hearing about the 9/11 attacks, I know for a fact that Tom Scharpling sat in his car and ate an entire cheesecake.

The first time I called in, I threw Tom a softball - making fun of Uwe Boll for challenging his critics to a fight. Having cleared that scary first hurdle, I became a regular caller for a couple of years, and few things gave me as much pride as being named a Power Caller. (One day, I will frame Neil Numberman's glorious drawing of myself with Dave, Erika, Laurie and Paycheck). For the most part, I think that I've been good about following the One Golden Rule of calling in to the show: don't call in unless you have something to say.

For a few years, I wrote the episode summaries for the WFMU archive page, wherein I was tasked with condensing two and a half hours of mirth and mayhem into 250 characters. Each episode of the show into a tweet and a half. It's hard! Whenever I need to be cheered up, I love reading that page. Not because I'm an arrogant creep who loves his own handiwork (though that's probably also true), but because, free of context, it's very fun to see some of the conversation topics that have come up on the show. To name but three that you may have forgotten:

—Discussion of Shohreh Aghadashloo's breathing issues!

—Tom considers buying a Simon & Garfunkel-inspired musical on eBay!

—Tom imagines what The Human Carpet's comedy podcast would sound like!

It's fun, as a relatively long-term listener, to try and remember those bits, plus things like the Sanjaya interview, or the time Tom spoke to Luther Campbell, or the short period when Mike went by the name Steve on-air. I don't get to listen live very often anymore due to domesticity and a more-demanding work schedule, but I'm always up-to-date on the archives. I don't know how long Tom will keep doing the show, but I couldn't be more thankful that it has been going strong for as long as it has. Because of the show, I have a dollar from John Hodgman, real-life friends throughout the world, two-thirds of my Twitter followers, and all the laffs to last a lifetime.



I was a real student, and still am, of McLuhan's and learned a lot about understanding media from him. And one of the first things he taught me was, you've got to separate the content out. You can't let the content define the medium. Well, that gave me two completely different spheres of influence, which was content and the medium.

So you work with both of them and they inform each other. And that's where I find the real creative, brand new stuff—that's where new ideas are born, for me, in that crucible.

TS: Where in your life now is songwriting or creating? Where does it complement your life where you're at now?

MN: Well, for me it's much more about comfort and healing and satisfaction and fulfillment and things. I write songs that please and inspire me with no understanding of how they might find a way into public use at all. Now, I would like to say that's 100% satisfying to me, but there's a bit of it that's sad because I would like to share it, but I don't have any idea how to do it.

I started VR3D to try to do that with a 3D world where people shared live concerts, but that's come to nothing so far. I don't know which way to go with it, but in terms of writing songs and making music and being active in that, it's still what drives me.

TS: Is there a song or songs that you would want to be representative of you?

MN: Well, you've heard this a thousand times if you ask it: They're like children. So you don't really have any favorites. The albums that I enjoy listening to of mine the most is Tropical Campfires and The Prison. Those two works, I still enjoy when I listen to it. In terms of a song or something that just says it for me, they all have very unique points of view.

TS: Sure, so they're all just a part of the thing.

MN: Yeah, well, they're a part of you. They cannot be a part of me. Because now it's a part of you.

The janitor don't need you!

Craig Carton at Starbucks

Bill Maher drinking games

11th Juggalo

You guys carry me tonight

Professional ego stroker

Human carpet + Jim Goad w/ Garrison Keillor

Hell's bells

I'm here to make art, people

My locker pushed in — mash your face in — quit if it happens one more time — same goes for Zodiac killer

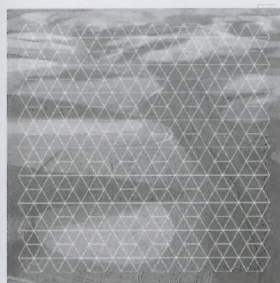
"Jigglin' the handle"

NPR/McSweeney's — they're scared!

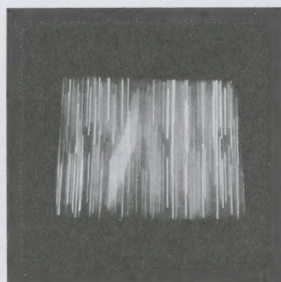
Egg Cederä

Adam Carolla à Hitler

¡Musica! Melancólico alimento para los que vivimos de amor



Henry Plotnick, Fields



Food Pyramid
Ecstasy and Refreshment



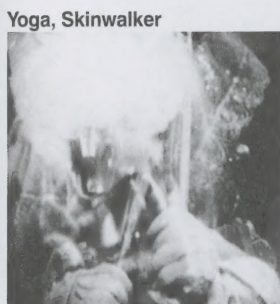
Hank IV
Depravity's Rainbow



M. Geddes Gengras
Test Leads



White Manna



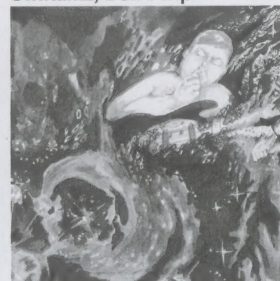
Yoga, Skinwalker



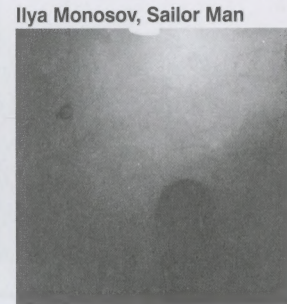
Aufgehoben
Fragments of the Marble Plan



Future Shuttle, Water's Edge



Swiftumz, Don't Trip



Ilya Monosov, Sailor Man

70 SPIKE NICKNAMES

by Daniel Ralston

Over the years, we've gotten to hear some choice celebrity nicknames from frequent Best Show caller Spike. Some of the favorites include "Jenny From The Bedroom" for J. Lo, "Silly Sarah" for Sarah Palin and our personal favorite, "Baked Ziti-Jones". We'll let you figure that one out. Since Spike is limited to just a few minutes of airtime each week, we only get to enjoy a sampling of his witty bon mots. Fortunately, Daniel Ralston did some research into the recesses of Spike's snakepit of a mind and came back with 70 new celebrity nicknames steeped in the kind of rapier wit we've come to expect from our favorite mentally imbalanced caller.



- | | | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Steve Purell | 19. Cage Free Eggs | 37. John Bane Of My Existence | 55. Dirk Cheater |
| 2. James Spayed and Neutered | 20. Opie & Anthony | 38. Arianna Huffing Paint | 56. Brian Stumble |
| 3. Jump In the Hudson | 21. Huey, Duey and Louie. | 39. Mario Rubik's Cube | 57. Jessica Abstains |
| 4. Ocean Spray Cran-Apple | 22. Jillette Razor Blades | 40. Ms. Don't Call Me Maybe | 58. Snake Handler |
| 5. Chris Drown | 23. Vladimir Putrid | 41. Jon Anchovy | 59. All You Can Eat Buffet |
| 6. Kevin Space Cadet | 24. Rupert Pupkin | 42. Sofa Vargas | 60. Hidey Glum |
| 7. Millie Raccoonis | 25. Zuckerturd | 43. Lames Blonde | 61. Hot Spatula |
| 8. Caveman O'Borin' | 26. France Leg Weak | 44. Russell Bland | 62. Sherry Gambling |
| 9. Tryin' Blanks | 27. Kenny Crevise | 45. John O' Really | 63. Ors Unwell |
| 10. The Scarlet Letter | 28. Nine Inch Male | 46. Walkin' the Plank | 64. Jimmy Plague |
| 11. Huge Jackhammer | 29. Ari Fool's Gold | 47. John Revolta | 65. Rubber Tire Plant |
| 12. Vicki Lawrence | 30. Jenny McBarfy | 48. Amy Polecat | 66. Ricky Gerbil Face |
| 13. Trailer In a Crater | 31. Tim Bowtie | 49. Great Danes | 67. Mann Oh, Man |
| 14. Wet Willis | 32. George 3 Man | 50. Gold Bond Powder | 68. Marc Marinade |
| 15. Can't be mocked | 33. Michelle Blechmann | 51. Downey Fabric Softener | 69. Flake Fogelberg |
| 16. Zach Gallon Of Gas | 34. Bloomin' Onion | 52. Narrow Smith | 70. Barely Stupor |
| 17. Death MacFalter | 35. Try A New Bank | 53. Less Anderson | |
| 18. Judge Apple | 36. Pooper Scooper | 54. Much Obligated | |



"Hilarious
#stuff!"

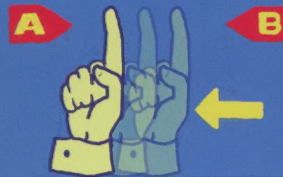
1. Steve Carell 2. James Spader 3. Jennifer Hudson 4. Frank Ocean 5. Chris Brown 6. Kevin Spacey 7. Mila Kunis 8. Conan O'Brien 9. Tyra Banks 10. Scarlett Johansson 11. Hugh Jackman 12. Jennifer Lawrence 13. Tyler the Creator 14. Bruce Willis 15. Meryl Streep 16. Zach Galifianakis 17. Seth MacFarlane 18. Judd Apatow 19. Nicolas Cage 20. Ron Howard 21. Julia Louis-Dreyfus 22. Penn Jillette 23. Vladimir Putin 24. Rupert Murdoch 25. Mark Zuckerberg 26. Lance Armstrong 27. Lenny Kravitz 28. Trent Reznor 29. Jeremy Piven 30. Jenny McCarthy 31. Tim Tebow 32. George Foreman 33. Michele Bachmann 34. Michael Bloomberg 35. Tyra Banks 36. Anderson Cooper 37. John Boehner 38. Arianna Huffington 39. Marco Rubio 40. Carly Rae Jepsen 41. Jon Bon Jovi 42. Sofia Vergara 43. Daniel Craig 44. Russell Brand 45. John C. Reilly 46. Christopher Walken 47. John Travolta 48. Amy Poehler 49. Claire Danes 50. Jeff Goldblum 51. Robert Downey, Jr. 52. Steven Tyler 53. Wes Anderson 54. Mary J. Blige 55. Derek Jeter 56. Bryant Gumbel 57. Jessica Chastain 58. Chelsea Handler 59. Warren Buffett 60. Heidi Klum 61. Scott Bakula 62. Garry Shandling 63. Orson Welles 64. Jimmy Page 65. Robert Plant 66. Ricky Gervais 67. Almee Mann 68. Marc Maron 69. Jake Fogelneest 70. Bradley Cooper

WHAT SOUND
FILLS THE
EARS OF THE
DAMNED?

HERE WE GO WITH A RIDICULOUS WFMU FOLD-IN

Tom Scharpling asked me to do this, and who am I to say "No" to him? He's a great guy, and I thought it would be fun to try. Al Jaffee makes it look so easy, but he's a genius with decades of practice.

SWIPE FROM A TO B TO FOLD



THE BRAYING OF THOSE WHO WILL NEVER FIND REST
SHOW US HOW SENSIBLE A DECISION IT IS TO STAY ON
WISE PATHS. THEY SHRIEK GIBBERISH: GRRGLM! THHERRFMU!

WRITER AND ARTIST: MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

